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THE BIVOUAC;

OR

STORIES OF THE PENINSULAR WAR.



THE
B I V O U A C ;
OR
STORIES OF
THE PENINSULAR WAR.
BY W. H. MAXWELL,
AUTHOR OF
"STORIES OF WATERLOO," "WILD SPORTS OF THE WEST," &c.
IN THREE VOLUMES.
VOL. III.

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OF
THE THIRD VOLUME.

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THE BIVOUAC.

BARBARA MAXWELL.

He clasped her sleeping to his heart,
And listened to each broken word ;
He hears—why doth Prince Azo start,
As if the archangel's voice he heard ?
That sleeping whisper of a name,
Bespeaks her guilt, and Azo's shame !

PARASINA.

IMOGEN. False to his bed ! what is it to be false ?

PISANIO. Alas, good lady !

IMOGEN. I false ?

CYMBELINE.



THE BIVOUAC.

CHAPTER I.

BARBARA MAXWELL.

THE night was dark and stormy—the snow fell fast—and the wind howled through the leafless branches of the old oaks which encircled Selby Place. Doors shook and casements rattled, as the frequent gusts struck them heavily. All without was gloomy and inclement, while the scene of joyous revelry within, formed a striking contrast. Christmas had passed, and right hospitably had that ancient festival been observed. Twelfth-night was come, and all that was noble and fair for many a mile around, were assembled in the baron's hall; while in buttery and

kitchen, yeomen and domestics were carousing merrily.

The feasting was ended, and the hall cleared for the dance. The music struck up a sprightly measure; and in the silver stream that a hundred tapers shed over the polished floor, stately dames and bright-eyed damsels were led from their seats by the noblest of the youth of Britain.

It was the mirthful season of the year, venerated alike by saint and sinner, when a world's deliverance had been achieved, and why should not all be happy? Beauty was beaming from sparkling eyes, wine had cheered the heart, and glee and roundelay lightened the bosom of every lurking care. Yet in that joyous company one spirit was depressed; and he who should have been the happiest of all sighed in secret, although, with a forced smile of welcome, he did the honours of his father's hall to the distinguished guests whom the old baron had collected.

But three months had passed since George Selby had been united to a young and beauteous

bride. Who had not heard of Barbara Maxwell? When the wine-cup was drained to beauty, Barbara's was the name that hallowed it. If the minstrel lacked a theme for his ballad, whose would he choose but Lord Nithsdale's daughter? The hunter left the chase to gaze upon her, if her white jennet passed him on the moor; and even the fair themselves owned that Barbara was fairer. All said she was born to be loved; while, unconscious of the charms which envy admitted to be peerless, her unassuming gentleness would win a heart that could look on loveliness like hers, and be unmoved.

Long and ardently George Selby had wooed, and long had success been doubtful. A lover's path is rarely smooth, and his had been beset with difficulties. But what will not the ardour of youthful passion overcome? George Selby's truth and constancy succeeded; and Barbara knelt with him at the altar, and became his for ever.

We have already hinted that obstacles had

delayed Selby's marriage; and though he had won his love, the union, strange as it may appear, had not been one that either of their families approved. Among the flower of the northern youth, Selby was the first. He was barely touching on ripe manhood, and his face and figure were just what please woman. Gifted with natural talents, his education had been sedulously attended to—and in the manly exercises of the times he was accounted perfect. His turn had been a military one—and he had already served two campaigns in the Low Countries, and gained brilliant reputation as a rising soldier. But Barbara's charms won him from war to love, and at her feet he laid his youthful laurels. Heir to the ancient title and estates of a family coeval with the Conquest, Selby might have sought the proudest damsel at the court of his royal master; and old and powerful as the house of Maxwell might account themselves, the lineage of the bold bridegroom, in pride and antiquity was equal even to that of the lords of Nithsdale.

And what could cloud a union of two persons thus formed for each other? Alas! that which has caused many a heart to bleed, and flung thorns in the path of love—that which has caused the deepest attachment to pine away and perish! Selby and his beautiful bride were professors of different creeds, and both bigoted in their respective beliefs on matters of religion. George dissented warmly from the errors of the Italian church—while Barbara had been taught from infancy to consider that of her forefathers the true and apostolic faith, and that to the shorn priest of Rome, the power alone rested to remit her sins, and point the path that would lead her to salvation.

That love—and tenderly they loved each other—should stifle any unhappy misgivings in two young breasts, might have been expected, and under common circumstances such would have been undoubtedly the case. But a fierce and acrimonious temper pervaded the religionists of these uncharitable days—a dreadful discovery

had just been made—and accident brought to light the foulest conspiracy that the demon spirit of bigotry had ever fabricated.

Within a few days after Selby had wedded Barbara Maxwell, the infernal plot to blow up the king and parliament was accidentally detected, and the chief of those concerned arrested, tried, and brought most justly to the scaffold. A dreadful sensation was created by the atrocity of the plan; and men, hitherto tolerant, became ruthless persecutors. The fears of the timid could not be readily allayed, and the fiercer-minded turned them to account. Determined to uproot popery from the land, all of that faith were branded as disloyal; and many, utterly ignorant of the intended murder of the king and council of the nation, were falsely implicated in a conspiracy, from which, in their very souls, they revolted, while every Romanist was obnoxious to suspicion. Barbara's elder brother, to whom she was most devotedly attached, happened at the time to be travelling abroad. The tenacity with which the

Maxwells clung to their fathers' faith and resisted the attempts of the reformers, caused them, amongst others, to be suspected. The master of Nithsdale was denounced as a principal in the infernal plot ; and a journey, solely undertaken for pleasure, was tortured into a political embassy to the court of Spain, to require for the conspirators countenance and assistance from abroad.

That Selby's young bride should not feel unpleasant consequences from this burst of national indignation, which the atrocious designs of the popish party so justly drew forth, would be impossible. All who surrounded her were uncompromising followers of the reformers, and were, from old prejudice and late disclosures, deeply incensed against every disciple of the church of Rome. Barbara had been taught to consider Protestant hostility to her faith as implacable ; and, conscious of the enormity of the recent plot, with the sensibility of a soft and fearful nature, she fancied that she perceived an abated ardour in George Selby's love, and read

distrust in looks, that were never turned upon her but in kindness. Even the homage her charms elicited from her husband's kinsmen was mistaken—and gentle attentions were, as she imagined, used only to hide concealed dislike.

Lord Nithsdale had been residing for some time in the ancient dwelling of the Maxwells—the castle of Caerlaverock—and the inclemency of the season for many weeks prevented Barbara from having any communication with her father's insulated home. Nothing beyond the general rumour had reached her respecting the plot. She heard that many of those implicated had been brought to justice, and paid the penalty of their treason. In deference to his lady's faith, George Selby, with the tact of gentle breeding, seldom alluded to a subject which he knew must pain her feelings, and Barbara was perfectly unconscious that suspicion had fallen on any of her own proud name. She grieved that men professing her religion, could have imagined a design so desperately wicked, and by their crimes brought

obloquy and shame on the unoffending members of their own faith.

When it was asserted that Ralph Maxwell was connected with the conspiracy, George Selby behaved as a brave man should, and stoutly maintained the innocence of his absent relative. His devotion to his bride was tender and respectful, and such as her birth and beauty demanded ; and though he observed with pain a striking alteration in her manner, never for a moment did he permit his own regard to appear abated.

On the Twelfth-night, according to the ancient usage of the Selbys, all that was distinguished in the north of Cumberland had assembled in the castle hall. Noble as was the feasting and light the revelry, one circumstance clouded the general joy. She who should have been the meteor beauty for all to gaze on, had, with evident exertion, contrived to sit through the banquet ; her deep dejection could not be concealed ; and while all beside were waiting for the dance, Barbara had left the hall.

Where was the bride? In vain the eyes of many sought her through the spacious chamber. The ball was stayed—the lady inquired for—and her maid presently returned with an apology from her mistress, excusing, under the plea of indisposition, her temporary absence from the company. The baron knitted his dark brows in anger, and took his son aside. What passed was brief, and in a whisper. A red flush coloured young Selby's cheek, and bowing to his father he left the hall. The lord of the mansion waved his hand—the music played a merry air—and the dance commenced.

If the mission on which George Selby went had been to induce his fair lady to rejoin the company, it failed; for he returned alone. His look was agitated, and his manner unusually excited. He stopped but for a short time in the hall, beckoned a favourite kinsman to follow, and turning down a dark corridor, entered a recess at the extremity, whose remoteness from the scene of merriment, permitted an unreserved

conversation to pass between his cousin and himself.

“George,” said the latter, “what has disturbed you thus? believe me, others besides me have noticed it. Rouse thee, man. Our customary festival, and the noble company who have met to share our twelfth-night revelry, demand a merrier mood than thine.”

“Alas!” replied the youth, with a deep sigh, “Alas! Harry, I am very wretched; and I cannot with so sad a heart put on a smiling countenance.”

“And what thus chafes you, George, and at such an ill-timed season?” inquired his kinsman. “If it be not a secret—”

“Secrets I have none from thee, Harry. Friends from infancy like us—”

“Why yes, George,” returned Wyndham; “few brothers love each other better. My mother lived only to give me birth, my father was slain six months after, and I was thus left an orphan. I was nursed in the same chamber that

thou wert—in boyhood the same teacher schooled us; we played at the same games; and when we grew up, and went together to the wars, one tent covered us, and on the same field we rode our first charge, side by side together. Can Harry Wyndham do aught to relieve his friend's distress?"

"Alas!—No. My sorrows are beyond thy friendly ministry."

"And yet, George, surely thou shouldst be happy if ever man was. Hast thou not won an honourable reputation? Hast thou not before thee a rich inheritance? Art thou not of noble lineage? But far beyond all these, art thou not mated to the loveliest and gentlest maid, that the Border, famed as it is for beauty, ever boasted?"

"And there lies my sorrow, Hal."

"Indeed!—'tis strange."

"Strange, Harry, it may be; but, alas! it is too true,"—returned young Selby with a bitter sigh.

“ I am lost in wonder ! ” exclaimed his friend and cousin.

“ Look down the corridor, and be certain there be no listener near.”

Wyndham obeyed and replied,

“ We are safe from intrusion—none can approach but I shall see them. Whoever comes hither must cross yon stream of light, and it will reveal him to us. Speak, George—Speak freely to your kinsman.”

“ Harry,” returned Selby, “ I know your love for me, and can I mark mine better, than by opening to you those secret sorrows that shall be hidden from all else, even my father. Alas ! that I should have lived to make the sad confession. Barbara loves not ! or if she does, her love is for another ! ”

Wyndham started as if a dagger pierced him.

“ Hold, George—for God’s sake—hold ! Art mad, or doting ? By Heaven ! had any tongue but thine breathed such a thought—so damning

to the reputation of my gentle kinswoman—I would have stabbed him !”

“ If, Hal, thou canst feel thus, marvel not that my cheek is blanched, and my heart agonized beyond what thou or any other can imagine.”

“ But,” exclaimed Wyndham passionately—“ why these dreadful doubts? What, George, can have produced this sad and horrible suspicion? She—Barbara Maxwell! She—whose angel looks are only emblems of her purity. By my soul’s hope, the thing is utterly incredible! George, my friend, my brother, banish these idle phantasies. The blessed sun is not more stainless, than the sweet and guileless beauty who sleeps upon thy bosom!”

“ Oh! that I could but think so! Listen to me, Harry—Listen, for I will tell thee all. Thou knowest that in creeds we differ; and ere Barbara consented to wed me, fearful she might be influenced in the exercise of her religion, she

stipulated that she should be permitted to worship Heaven as she pleased. I plighted a knight's word that in this her will should be undisputed ; and I have kept that promise faithfully. Lest in a household like ours, where all are ardent Protestants, any thing should interrupt her in the performance of her religious duty, I fitted for her use the oratory our grandame used, before the blessed reformation turned our house from idle ceremonies to the true faith. There Barbara's devotions were sacred from intrusion—none but herself had access to that suite of chambers—she alone keeps the key—and when she would meditate or pray, no eye save that which looks on all, watches her secret orisons.”

“ ’Twas right, George,” exclaimed Selby's kinsman. “ Need I tell thee how much I hate that idolatrous communion ; but till it please Heaven to point out the path, and clear the film away which papal delusions have cast over Barbara's reason, as a true knight and lover, thou

must protect her in the free exercise of what she thinks religious worship."

"I have done so, Harry, and so will I continue doing. But to proceed For a time, if ever man knew happiness, I found it in Barbara's arms. She trusted to the creed in which she had been so artfully schooled; but though her views were false, there was in all she thought and did such fervid purity, that, if innocent adoration be pleasing to the Deity, hers must have been acceptable. Once, and once only, I stole unguardedly upon her privacy. She was kneeling before the altar of the Virgin Mother. I approached in silence; and, unconscious that any one was listening, I overheard her supplications. The orison that passed her rosy lips was for my present and eternal happiness; and so innocently but ardently was the petition offered up, that I knelt beside her and united my prayer to hers. Was it wrong? What though the Virgin smiled upon us, it was not the senseless canvass on

which the Florentine had poured the magic touches of his pencil that I worshipped. No—it was to Him alone who had power, that I bent my knee. We rose. She flung her arms around me, and as she kissed me, murmured, ‘George, though our creeds may differ, surely, lord of my love! our hearts are one!’ ”

“And can a doubt touching the love of such a woman cross thy mind, George?”

“Alas! my friend, what an alteration has a few weeks made. From the time that infernal conspiracy was discovered, I have remarked her become thoughtful and depressed. Fancying that she feared I should imbibe a prejudice against popery, that might even extend itself to her, I endeavoured by renewed attentions to prove that my love was unchangeable. She seemed to feel my kindness, wept upon my bosom, and thanked me for my confidence. Suddenly a change came over her. She became timid, absent, and desponding. If I entered her chamber unex-

pectedly, she started as if I were an object to be feared. Her devotional exercises were redoubled, and yesterday she was for several hours secluded in her oratory. To a casual observation which her long absence inadvertently elicited, she blushed and trembled like a guilty thing. But last night—damnation ! ” — and he struck his forehead wildly with his hand. “ Even to you, loved and trusted as a brother, I can hardly mention it. Last night, uneasy thoughts had kept me waking, while Barbara was slumbering at my side. The chamber lamp beamed out with uncommon brilliancy, and I could not but regard with a husband’s pride the angel form that rested on my arm. She was dreaming. I saw her face flushed with pleasure—she pressed me to her bosom—laid her lips to mine—kissed me with ardour—and murmured—‘ Welcome, my beloved—thrice welcome. How could you remain so long away. Come to my heart, my love,’—and, O God ! the name she named was not—*mine* ! ”

He shuddered in an agony of passion—both remained silent for some moments, until Selby recovered and continued—

“ You marked her bearing at the banquet—her sadness was apparent to every guest ; and when by my father’s command I sought her chamber, to entreat she would return to the company, her maid—the daughter of her nurse—in whom she reposes boundless confidence, told me in evident confusion, that her mistress had retired to the oratory, and begged she might not be disturbed. What, Harry, can all this mean ? Is it a fitting season for telling beads, when the noblest in the land have come to my father’s hall for mirth and revelry ? Yes, I might pardon readily this ill-timed devotion ; but, oh, God ! how can I excuse that guilty kiss—how extenuate that damning exclamation ! ”

In vain for a while did Wyndham strive to calm the excited feelings of his unhappy kinsman. By degrees Selby’s violence softened down, and he was composing himself to rejoin his father’s

guests, when Wyndham touched his arm, and pointed to a female figure which crossed the light, and hastened towards the place they had conversed in.

“It is Barbara’s attendant,” he whispered. “What can bring her here?”

Gillian approached; and as she drew near the recess, the kinsman heard her mutter,

“Where can he be? They said he passed this corridor. Hist! Master of Selby!”—and she raised her voice.

“Who calls?” said George Selby, advancing. “What would you with me, Gillian?”

“You *here*, master! and in the dark too! No wonder I have sought you vainly.”

“Your business, Gillian?”

“Is to say that my lady is desirous to return. She feels her spirits lighter, and only waits you, Master of Selby, to conduct her to the hall.”

“George,” said Wyndham, in a low voice, “go instantly. Notwithstanding all your doubts,

I'll pawn my life upon her love. Never could evil heart inhabit a form like Barbara Maxwell's. Go, my kinsman ; I'll be before you, and announce that your lady's indisposition is so far abated, as to enable her to meet your father's guests again. Believe me, the tidings will be welcome."

" Ay—Gillian, say to your mistress that I shall be with her presently ; and thou, Hal, excuse my absence as thou best canst."

He said, and hastened to his wife's apartment, while his kinsman rejoined the merry company, and intimated that the " Border flower," as Barbara was called, might be presently expected.

But where went Barbara Maxwell ? When she left the hall she hastened to her own chamber, and summoned her attendant. Gillian presented her mistress with a light, placed a basket in her hand, and then took post in the passage, while her lady proceeded to the oratory. 'Twas a strange time for prayer ! but it was not to pray that Barbara stole from the festive throng. Softly she unlocked the chamber of devotion ; and when

the door opened, what did the taper glance on? Was it the sculptured effigy of some holy martyr, or the softer features of the penitent Madonna? No—Stretched on a sofa, a young cavalier was slumbering; and instead of rosary and missal, a rapier and pistols were laid upon the lady's table!

On tiptoe the bride of George Selby approached the sleeping knight.

“Hist, Ralph, wake—’tis I—’tis Barbara!”

The stranger sprang up, clasped the fair visiter to his heart, and kissed her again and again.

“Why hast thou left the hall?” he said. “I half repent me that I chose this place for shelter. Thou wilt be missed, my sister, and thy absence will pain thy gallant husband, and possibly occasion surprise, if not beget displeasure.”

“And didst thou think, dear Ralph, that I would leave thee here in darkness, and without food, while I was gaily feasting? Oh, no—I fancied the tables would never be drawn; and my impatience, I am sure, was far too marked to

pass unnoticed. Come, Ralph, let's see what Gillian has provided,"—and she lighted a lamp that hung from the ceiling, while the Master of Nithsdale quickly unclosed the basket.

"Ah! blessings on thee, Gillian. Look, Barbara, what fare the gipsy has lighted on. A pasty that would tempt a monk; and two flasks, Rhenish and Burgundy, if I judge rightly from the colour. If this be hardship, as you called it, may my visitations never be more severe. Why, in the next room, there is a pallet fit for a cardinal's repose. Well, I'll to supper, and do thou return. Do, dearest sister, thy absence will seem remarkable."

"I cannot leave thee, Ralph; for there is a mystery in this concealment that has made me truly wretched."

"Tush—I'll tell it thee to-morrow."

"Now, Ralph—be it now—if thou lovest me."

"Well, if it must be so, our supper and story shall proceed together. Draw that cork, Barbara; 'tis not the first time thou wert my Hebe,

girl—*girl*—Ah ! girl no longer. Pardon me, honoured *dame*—I cry thy mercy. My next visit mayhap will dub me uncle.”

“Hush, thou malapert. Come, do not trifle with me. If you knew how miserable I am and have been, you would without delay remove my doubtings.”

“Well, well, Barbara ; it must be done. Sit down. Wilt thou not pledge me ? Right Rhenish as ever crossed the sea. Thou must drink, Barbara ; else, as you know, I may be drugged, unless I insist upon that security.”

“How teasing, thou trifling boy. I’ll poison thee to-morrow, if I be kept in suspense a moment longer.”

“Well, girl, the tale is simple—but I would rather thou wouldst stay for it till morning.”

“Not one moment, Ralph. ’Tis no light event that obliges the Master of Nithsdale to hide him in his sister’s chamber, when his peers are feasting beneath the same roof-tree.”

“Come, thou knowest where to pinch me,

Barbara—and how to stir the hot blood of the Maxwells. 'Tis idle to conceal aught from thee now. Fill me another goblet, and I will satisfy thy questioning." He sipped the wine she gave him, and then continued :

"Residing in England, thou hast heard no doubt much concerning that villanous conspiracy?"

"Oh, yes—and deeply has it grieved me. Those, Ralph, who are opposed to our religion, will brand us all with the obloquy that horrible design has raised against a whole community."

"True, girl, and there lies the cause of my temporary concealment. I was, as you well know, travelling for improvement. I heard abroad a strange story of the detected plot. It was, as I then believed, a wild and exaggerated rumour. I posted homewards, and landed on the coast some sixty miles from this. Judge my astonishment, when there I saw a printed proclamation, and, among many names, a reward offered for my apprehension as one of the chief conspirators!"

Barbara Maxwell sprang from her chair.

“For *thee*, Ralph! Thy name enrolled among a gang of murderers! Didst thou tear down the lying paper, and cudgel to death the villain who had dared affix it?”

“I did neither, Barbara. The paper remains untorn; and it would have been poor vengeance for the Master of Nithsdale, to beat the beadle’s brains out—if he had such.”

“Go on, Ralph. What didst thou, in God’s name?”

“What a Maxwell should. I despatched servants for my tried friends, Hay and Seton. They will be here the third day from this. We will ride post to London. I’ll reach the presence of James—ay, though I stab the doorkeeper—fling down my glove before his royal feet, and call on the villain that defamed me to obey the challenge and fight me to the death.”

“Thou, Ralph—thou, cognizant of that murderous scheme?”

“Ay—Barbara. They had it that I was a

foreign agent. By Heaven! I nearly lose all temper, to think that such a felon charge should have been whispered against one of the house of Nithsdale. What, though we have held our fathers' faith, when has our loyalty been impeachable? Look to the motto of our arms. When once, our fealty slighted and our services forgotten, in his extremity a king sent to our ill-used ancestor for support—when the royal cause was almost hopeless, and others had refused to arm, or sent an evasive reply—what was the answer of our grandsire? '*I am ready.*' But come, Barbara, you must away. Remember, my love, that a stronger tie than sisterly regard now binds thee!"

"Ralph—why remain here? Come among thy equals boldly, and proclaim your innocence. I will bring my husband here. My life on it, George Selby will maintain his brother's honour against any who dare insinuate aught against it."

"He has already done it nobly. In a com-

pany some days since, my name was coupled with the traitors. Boldly did thy lord assert me to be innocent, and flung his glove upon the floor for any to take up, who would venture to question my loyalty. Barbara, thou hast chosen well; and Selby shall be to me a brother—ay—in love as well as law. But thou must go—nay, not another minute. Banish that fearful look. Away then in thy brightest smiles—and tell thy husband that in the court of England's king there is no beauty can match 'the Border flower.' ”

“ Oh—thou wouldst coax me by gross flattery. Answer one question more, and I will leave thee till to-morrow. Why wait the coming of thy friends, and hide thee for another hour? Are not the houses of Nithsdale and Selby united? hast thou not kinsmen and supporters if thou need'st them, almost within thy call.”

“ No, Barbara—the heir of Caerlaverock has been foully wronged, and he alone shall assert his injured honour and wipe the stain away. Did

I need assistance, was not my father's hall nearer than this of Selby? Did I need allies, is there a Maxwell in the Border that would hold back to right me; ay, even were it only to be effected by the sword? Had I sought Caerlaverock, my enemies would whisper, that the power of the father had screened the offending of the son. Did I permit thy husband to know that I was returned, and his kindred espouse my quarrel, would it not be said that the loyalty of the house of Selby had saved the master of Nithsdale from the consequences of his treason? No—let two days pass. My trusty friends will answer my call. I will burst upon my enemies unawares; and ere they dream that I have ventured on the sea, I will knock at the palace-gate, proclaim the traitor has returned, and were the slanderer proud Buckingham himself, if hand and rapier fail not, wash off the stain upon my honour in the blood of him who coupled treason with the name of Ralph of Nithsdale.”

“And must I leave thee in this solitude, and thy spirit chafed thus?”

“Oh—go, my sister. Farewell till morning”—and with a playful effort he led the fair one to the door, bade her a kind adieu, and next moment was the lonely occupant of the oratory, and left to his meditations for the night.

When Barbara returned to her chamber, the visit of her lord was announced. Aware how strange her absence must have appeared, she despatched Gillian to seek him. George Selby obeyed the summons promptly, and hastened to his lady’s dressing-room. A heavier heart never obeyed the call of beauty—for that kiss—that sleeping exclamation—haunted his memory.

“I shall never know happiness again,”—he muttered, as he approached the door. “Oh, Barbara, thou hast racked my bosom sorely; and yet were it bared to thy view, there wouldst thou find naught but thine own loved image”—He knocked.

“Come in, love,”—responded a voice that once thrilled upon his heart like music. There stood Barbara; recent excitement had added to her charms—the flushing cheek—the sparkling eye—Oh! she had never looked so beautiful!

“George,” she said, “I fear my absence has displeased thee; yet, trust me, love, I did not mean intentional offence. I have been ill and nervous. Some of these days I will confess the cause, and when known, I feel it will be pardoned. Am I forgiven, love? You once said, when lovers quarrelled, a kiss should seal their reconciliation,”—and she held her rosy lips to his. “What makes you so sad, George? Have I not owned my fault; and is it not my first offending?”

“Oh, Barbara,” he replied, in a voice so melancholy, that the sunken tone almost made the bride shudder. “Would that woman’s love were less maddening, but more enduring?”

“What mean you?”—and she coloured to the forehead. “Thy words imply a doubt on mine.”

A deep sigh was the only response ; while Barbara's eyes lightened.

“ And is mine already questioned ? ” she said, with more than customary warmth. “ What, George, was then this suit so easily won—my plight of love so lightly given—that a doubt is cast upon its permanence ? ”

Piqued at the insinuation her husband's words conveyed, she disengaged her hand from his, and turning her head away, tears rolled down her cheeks. To see that loved one weep—to mark the flush of indignation, that even a suspicion of her constancy elicited—was more than Selby could endure. In a moment he was kneeling at her feet, and imploring forgiveness for his infidelity. The first of love's offendings needs merely to be owned. In a moment, all but their mutual attachment was forgotten—hand in hand they re-entered the merry hall—Selby, with the buoyant air of one conscious of possessing the brilliant beauty that leaned upon his arm—and, “ from having lost their light awhile,” the eyes of Bar-

bara, "the blue of heaven's own tint," beaming more brilliantly than ever!"

George Selby glanced over the sparkling throng; he wished that his kinsman, who had so recently heard the confession of his uneasiness, should see now that suspicion was thrown to the winds, and that he was once more happy. But Wyndham was nowhere in the room; and on inquiry, his cousin learned that since their interview in the corridor, he had not returned to the dance. Astonished at his friend's continued absence, Selby despatched a servant to seek him in his own chamber. The room was untenanted—the castle was searched in vain—but Harry Wyndham was nowhere to be found.

An hour passed—a domestic whispered something to the bridegroom. Promptly the latter left the hall—the dance proceeded—and the kinsmen remained absent.

When he parted from his unhappy cousin, Wyndham was returning to the company he had

quitted, when he suddenly encountered Herbert the falconer, in the passage. To an inquiry of what brought the old man to such an unusual place, and at such a time, he replied it was to find out his young lord.

“You cannot see him, Herbert. He is particularly occupied. Are there not fitter times to speak about thy wood craft, old boy, than when thy master is engaged as he is this evening?”

“Wood craft!” exclaimed the falconer. “Dost thou think me mad, Master Wyndham, or fancy that hawk or hound would bring me to his presence now? Next to him I would speak to yourself, were we but safe from eavesdroppers.”

“Is it of moment, and am I interested in what you have to say, Herbert?”

“Hear and judge, Master Hal,” returned the falconer.

“Come to my room, Herbert. I know thee too well to doubt that any but some pressing errand would at this hour bring thee hither.”

Wyndham procured a lamp, and Herbert followed him. They entered the youth's apartment, and closed the door carefully.

"Now for thy tidings, Herbert, and cut the story short, or my absence may be noticed by my uncle, and chafe his temper."

"I have seen a ghost," said the falconer.

"Pish—what folly, old man. My kinsman would not have thanked thee much to have called him from his guests, and given him such intelligence."

"You may smile, Master Wyndham, but I, saw it plain 'as I see you; and afterwards observed its shadow on the wall."

"Ghosts leave no shadows, master falconer. Hast thou not been too familiar with the ale-butt? Come, Herbert, keep thy spectre for to-morrow, and to bed. I'll to the hall,"—and he raised the lamp, and moved towards the door.

"Stay—for God's sake! listen but a moment. I am not drunk or doting. The tale will surprise you."

“Well, be brief, Herbert. Know ye not what discourtesy it is to leave my uncle’s festival?”

“My tale shall be a short one, Master Hal. I was returning from the hazle copse, where I had harboured an outlying stag for our chase to-morrow; and my nearest path, you know, lay through the ancient pleasure-grounds. I entered the shrubbery, and when I turned the angle of the building, saw a light beaming from the window of the old oratory, which the Lady Margaret occupied some fifty years ago, and which, as I have heard, the Master’s bride uses for her acts of devotion. It was marvellous I thought, that when all were feasting in the castle, any one should remain at prayer; and fearing some taper had been forgotten, I waited to ascertain what had caused light in a part of the building to which so few have access. Presently the window that looks to the angle of the tower was unclosed. A man stood there for a minute, looked out upon the night, muttered something I could not hear, closed the casement, and retired.”

“Pshaw, Herbert, it was only the Lady Barbara, or Gillian her maid. When was it, old man, that this occurred?”

“Not five minutes since. Had proof been wanting that my sight had not deceived me, a shadow of a man, as it were in the act of fencing, fell on the tower wall. I looked some minutes longer; the shadow disappeared, but the light, when I left the tower, continued burning steadily.”

“Good Herbert, is this no coinage of the brain—no trickery of vision?”

“None, by the God of heaven! It struck me to be so strange, that I could not rest until I apprized the Master of the circumstance.”

“Better, Herbert, have told it as you have to me. A man—a light; it must be looked to. Go—I will join thee at the southern tower. Keep thy counsel, Herbert.”

“Fear me not, Master Wyndham. I am no tale-maker.”

“Well,” said the youth, “if this tale be true,

I cannot fathom woman. No, no—it's impossible. The fame of Barbara Maxwell was never tainted by a breath of suspicion. 'Tis a mistake; but duty to my kinsman demands that I should clear the mystery away."

He said—threw a cloak round him—belted on his sword, and in a few minutes joined the falconer at the appointed place.

"The light burns steadily," said the old re-tainer; "and not a minute since, a form too tall for woman's crossed the casement."

"Herbert, we will soon put thy story to the test," returned Wyndham. "The casement is not high; move softly on, and I will mount upon your shoulder. I cannot intrude upon the lady's privacy, for she is in the hall ere now. Come, and step cautiously."

In silence the youth and his companion placed themselves beneath the oratory. Some minutes passed, and nothing but the moaning of the storm disturbed the stillness of their watch. Faint strains of distant music were now and

again borne on the wintry blast, and their cheerless vigil formed a sad contrast to the merriment that reigned within the building.

“Herbert, thy eyes have for once deceived thee,” said Wyndham to his old companion. “The lady has left her taper burning; that was the light, and herself, most likely, the form that crossed thy vision. The snow-drift blinded thee on thy return from the thicket. Keep close counsel. Trust me, old friend, none save the lady and her maid enter that lonely chamber, from which the light is glancing.”

“No,” returned the falconer—“no, Master Hal, I am not astray. There is not among the youngest retainers in Selby Hall an eye that tracks a slot, or drives a cross-bolt truer. Saints of heaven! is not that the shadow of a man?”

Clear and distinct a figure was traced on the lighted space, which the lamp within the casement of the lady’s oratory had thrown upon the tower opposite!

“Hush, and assist me to climb the fretwork of

the window," said the youth, in a low whisper to his attendant; and unbelting his sword and flinging off his cloak, Harry Wyndham mounted easily with Herbert's assistance, and placed himself before the framing of the lattice.

The sight he witnessed appeared rather the delusion of a dream, than any thing of reality. Holy saints! In the private chamber of the high-born dame—the place sacred even from the visit of a husband—a young and handsome cavalier was calmly seated, and the disposition of every thing about, told that the chamber had been his residence for some time. His cloak was flung upon the couch—his sword and pistols were laid upon the table, and his plumed hat suspended from the wall, while, with a feeling of perfect security, he read by the lamp, whose light had caught the falconer's eye and roused his suspicion. Nor had the stranger's comforts been neglected. The requisites for making a comfortable meal were still remaining on the table; and wine-flasks and a goblet showed, that

in all besides he was most carefully attended to.

As the light fell directly on his face, Wyndham could mark it accurately. A nobler countenance was never painted by an artist. The profile of the unknown was strictly Grecian, while coal-black hair, a thin moustache, a high and noble forehead, eyes sparkling with intelligence and shaded by arched brows, completed a face as manly as it was handsome. Suddenly the stranger pushed away the book, and rising from his chair, strode once or twice across the chamber. His figure was tall, slight, and elegant; and his dress—in those days no trifling indication of the wearer's rank—was rich enough for any earl in Britain. After a turn or two he resumed his seat, replenished the goblet that stood before him, and then quietly resumed the book he had for the time laid aside.

Wyndham had seen enough. Softly he descended from the window, and with the falconer retired to a short distance.

“Hast thou seen aught strange, Master Hal?” inquired the retainer.

“I have seen, Herbert, that which, hadst thou sworn it, I would not have given credence to.”

“Was it a living thing that haunts that deserted chamber?” inquired the old man suspiciously.

“It was a sorry sight to witness, and one that must be concealed even from thee, Herbert. Thou art faithful. Watch, as thou lovest thy young lord, that casement until I return to thee. I will not be long absent.”

“Trust me, Master Wyndham, I will be vigilant. A cat shall not move, but I will mark it.”

“Hush—the figure again! I must not lose a moment.”

He said; and resuming cloak and sword hurried to the castle, leaving the falconer to observe the chamber that contained the unknown and unwelcome visitor.

When George Selby was called from the hall,

the servant directed him to the library; and great was his astonishment when he found the room well lighted, and several of his more immediate relatives assembled at the summons of his kinsman. A gloomy and death-like silence ensued upon his entrance; and his surprise was still more increased, when his father, in deep emotion, came into the apartment leaning on Harry Wyndham's arm. A creeping thrill of horror—an undefined feeling that some dreadful event was at hand—a terror that something calamitous would presently ensue, shook George's nerves, and seemed to chill his life-blood, while, with a convulsive effort to know the worst, he broke the fearful silence which all observed.

“Noble sir, friends and kinsmen, in God's name, what means this strange and ill-omened meeting? Speak—in mercy, speak!”

“George,” replied the baron, “thou hast ever been a good and dutious son. Wilt thou for filial love, and in honour of these gray hairs,

listen to thy father's counsel and promise to abide by his advice?"

"My noble father, what is that impends over me? What misfortune has befallen? If you would not break my heart, speak out—tell me the worst. Am I not a man? Have I not nerve to bear adversity?"

"Yes, my son. Courage was never wanting to a Selby—but coolness often."

"I will be calm, father. Speak, if you would not kill me."

"George," said the baron, in a broken voice, "the will of Heaven must be obeyed, and its decree submitted to. Life is but a chequered scene—grief follows on the heels of joy—and sorrow clouds prosperity. Thou hast been fortunate, my son; and thou art about to feel what all must feel."

"Go go—go on"—exclaimed the youth impatiently.

"Man thyself." The old baron paused—the

words appeared to choak him — “Barbara is false !”

“False !” cried young Selby. “What lying tongue dared couple falsehood and Barbara ?”

“Calm thee, my boy. There is, alas ! proof—damning proof—within these very walls !”

“Oh God ! and are my worst suspicions true ? and could that image of an angel be the wretched thing you call her ?”

“Were the person with whom she had offended placed within your power—”

“Ha ! Dost thou, my noble father, ask a Selby what vengeance he would exact from the man who had dishonoured him ? Blood ! father, blood !—an ocean, if it flowed within his veins, would be all too little to wash my shame away !”

A murmur of approbation filled the room.

“I cannot, will not blame thee, George ; but he that has thus injured thee, must, if noble, have fair play. Vengeance, but not murder, becomes the hand of a Selby.”

“But where is the villain? Is he in the house? Is he among the company?”

“Patience, my son—patience. Think ye that I would rob thee of thy just revenge? No, George. Old as this arm is, were there none other to avenge the injury, mine should at least attempt it.”

“Barbara — once idolized Barbara — a short month since had a saint taxed thee with harbouring an unholy thought, I would have said he slandered thee!” exclaimed George Selby; and, overcome with grief, the unhappy youth leaned for support upon Wyndham’s shoulder, and sobbed as if his heart was bursting.

To see a brave man weep is fearful. The bosom must be heavily overloaded, when tears are forced from eyes which have, all unmoved, looked on the reddest battle-field. His father vainly attempted to sooth him, and his kinsmen evinced the tenderest sympathy.

“George, we have a duty, and a painful one,

to perform—justice first, my son, and vengeance afterwards. Thou knowest the temper of the times, and that thy erring wife is of a faith opposed to our profession. If we act unadvisedly, the Romish party will not scruple to assert, that we have wrongfully accused her of falsehood to thy bed, only to work her ruin—and the penalty of crime will be imputed to our hatred of her religion. Hast thou courage to witness the disclosure of her shame, and remain here, while to her own face we establish her dishonesty?”

“Yes, my father; but the exposure of her guilt must not be before any save our own kinsmen. Barbara, though thou hast withered my young heart, and humbled my pride to the very earth, I will not have thy fall exhibited to those who are even now gazing on thy beauties, and fancying thee too pure and glorious for this sinful world.”

“Thou art right, my poor boy. Here her offending shall be proved—and here the painful scene shall end.”

“And here,” murmured the unfortunate youth, “shall I take the last look of that face, which earthly beauty never equalled.”

“Go, Hal,”—said the baron—“assume a look of indifference if thou canst, and without causing observation, lead the Lady Barbara hither. Is Herbert outside?”

“He is, my lord,” replied one of the Selbys.

“Let him remain till we require him here.”

A period of five minutes elapsed, while the old baron endeavoured to confirm the fortitude of his son, and enable him to support the painful discovery of Barbara's unworthiness. The door was softly unclosed—George Selby turned his head away, and leaned against the mantelpiece—his kinsmen looked upon the floor—while radiant in beauty, and little dreaming of the scene that awaited her, the Border flower gracefully approached the place where the baron was standing. Struck with the appearance of the party, she hesitated, and stopped in the middle of the room.

“ I crave your pardon, my lord. I have mistaken Master Wyndham—and been, without design, an intruder on these gentlemen.”

“ Would that it were so, lady. You have been sent for here, and I have been called on to disclose as sad a tale as ever passed a father’s lips.”

“ My lord !”—and the blood mounted to her cheeks.

“ Yes—’tis a trying visitation. I speak not of my own withered hopes, when I see the wrecked happiness of my only child, just as he had started on his earthly career, with as brilliant prospects as ever opened upon any.”

“ My lord—what means all this ? My husband’s silence—the unusual presence of these gentlemen ?”

“ It means, lady—that thou hast sullied thy own fair fame, and rendered him who confided in thee, wretched, miserable, and dishonoured.”

Pale and red by turns, Barbara Maxwell was silent for a moment ; but suddenly, and as if a

new impulse strengthened her, she advanced a step or two, and boldly addressed the baron.

“Never, Lord of Selby, did I fancy that the day would come when such a charge as thou hast made, dare be uttered in the hearing of a husband. Go on—and let me know the crime by which Barbara Maxwell has stained her reputation?”

Those near George Selby observed a shuddering of the whole frame, while his beautiful wife was speaking.

“Would, lady, that this were the indignation with which the innocent repudiate a charge of guilt. Why dwell upon the odious accusation? You have outraged the confidence of him to whom your loyalty was plighted. Start not, dame. Boldness cannot screen thy error. That place where my sainted mother prayed, now harbours the paramour of my worthless daughter.”

George Selby, who had continued leaning against the mantel like a being beaten by misfortune almost to a state of apathy, bounded from

the place he had reclined upon, and bursting past his kinsmen, exclaimed in a voice of thunder,

“Ha! In the oratory. Heaven, I thank thee!”—and catching up a sword, he threw aside those who vainly attempted to restrain him. His hand was already on the door, when Barbara rushed forward and seized him by the arm.

“Off!”—he cried. “Off—lest I harm thee! Bad as thou art, I would not willingly injure a hair of thine.”

But fearless and undismayed, Barbara held his arm.

“Sirs—gentlemen—hear me, and only for a moment. I am strange to you all. I am a woman; and, at least by men, that plea should be admitted. Once—had any told me an appeal to another would be required, I would have said he spoke a falsehood. What wouldst thou? I own at once that there is a knight where none has been before. I have but one boon to ask—let him be brought hither—and let the guilty be confronted?”

“Lady, I can refuse you nothing,”—replied George Selby, in a tone almost inaudible.

“Wilt thou, Master Wyndham, do me a small kindness, and summon my attendant hither?”

The youth bowed, left the chamber, and presently returned with Gillian. All seemed amazed, and marvelled what the result of this strange scene would be.

Calm as if she was merely despatching her tirewoman on some ordinary message, the Border flower pulled forth a key, and drew a jewel from her finger.

“Tell the knight thou knowest, Gillian, that Barbara Maxwell requires and demands his presence. Give him this ring—he will not disobey my summons. Good gentlemen, I pray your patience. Sheath thy weapon, Master of Selby. Surely against the peril of a single rapier there need not all this preparation, and with thy kinsmen around thee too.”

George Selby, as if under the influence of a spell, obeyed and sheathed his sword. The baron

seemed bewildered, and the dead silence was for some minutes unbroken. A quick step was heard along the corridor—the door flew open—a tall and noble youth entered the chamber, and advancing to the bride, demanded haughtily to know “who had dared to offer her offence?”

“Ralph!”—cried the lady of young Selby—but ere she could say more, her husband started as if an adder stung him, and half unsheathing his sword, exclaimed,

“The very name she murmured in her sleep!”

Wyndham seized his arm, and the baron whispered,

“Peace, my son — peace, an’ thou lovest me.”

The young stranger threw a bold glance round the room, and taking the lady’s hand, continued,

“Barbara—for what purpose am I required? I could only gather from your tirewoman, that some one had shown you a discourtesy—what means this mystery—and why are these gentlemen collected? Doubtless thy gallant husband

is not here, or a slight offered to his fair dame, would not require a brother's arm to redress it?"

"Brother!" exclaimed several voices, while George Selby dropped his rapier on the floor—Barbara clung to the stranger's arm—and the baron in amazement advanced to the unknown, and inquired his name and title.

"A name," replied the youth haughtily, "I need not be ashamed to own; although some villains availed them of my absence, and branded it with treason. I am Ralph Maxwell of Caerlaverock!"

"The Master of Nithsdale!" exclaimed several voices. "What an unfortunate mistake!"

"Unfortunate, indeed!" murmured young Selby, with a bitter sigh. "It has cost me wife and happiness, and I have lost an angel by my accursed idiotcy. To doubt her purity—to fancy Barbara could err! Fool—dolt—madman,"—and he smote his forehead passionately.

"Now, by mine honour, all this is to me unaccountable;" and turning to his sister, the

Master of Nithsdale continued — “Wilt thou explain this mystery, Barbara; and is yonder gentleman your lord?”

“He *was*, Ralph; and, had I believed him, one who would have cut the throat of any knave who would have whispered aught against my loyalty. But circumstances have changed—my fame is sullied—and even my fidelity to his bed is more than questionable. On these grave charges, am I arraigned before this noble lord and these good gentlemen. I sent for thee to witness the proofs of the delinquency, which has severed the holy bond that bound me at the altar to George Selby, and sends me back with thee, my brother, to my father’s hall, a fallen star—detected, disgraced, and repudiated.”

A momentary silence was broken by the unhappy husband.

‘Lady—’tis but an idle attempt for me to try and deprecate your honest indignation. I have lost you. You will, no doubt, return with your noble brother, and I leave England for ever.

When I am gone—when the last token comes to thee, Barbara, from my dying hand—then forgive my madness; and give a tear to the memory of him who committed one offence, and expiated his insanity by a short and suffering existence. Wilt thou not bid me farewell—one brief—one last farewell?”

The deep, the agonizing melancholy of George Selby's look and voice—the emotion of the old baron, as tears ran down his furrowed cheeks—while their stout kinsmen bent their sorrowful faces on the floor, was a scene that none could view unmoved. All waited in intense suspense the lady's answer; and when she advanced close to the spot where her hapless lord was standing, the listeners held their breath while the doom of the Master of Selby was uttered.

“You have asked me to say farewell, George; and the time was, when your slightest wish would have been to me a holy obligation. I had chosen you from a score of suitors; and strong in the faith of your love, though we sought Heaven

by different creeds, I laughed at the whisperings of those who would have insinuated a doubt of our being happy. That I loved you as a wife should love, my heart best knows. I would have followed thee through weal and woe—had malice tarnished your escutcheon, I would have descended with you to obscurity, and a murmur would not have escaped my lips—had poverty befallen us, the cottage would have been to me as welcome as the hall—had sickness stricken you, who would have found me absent from your couch? Well—let this pass. You ask me to say farewell.” —A deep and painful pause succeeded, and every heart beat faster. “Lord Nithsdale’s daughter has no forgiveness for a slight upon her constancy—but George Selby’s wife thus punishes the doubtings of her husband—”

Ere the last words were uttered, Barbara was weeping in her lover’s arms. A burst of admiration came from every lip; while the old baron, as he wiped away a tear, caught her from his son’s embrace to clasp her in his own.

“Now, by St. George!” he exclaimed, “I thought myself the proudest father in Britain; but I knew not till this night thy worth, my sweet Barbara! Go, my loved children; our absence will else create surprise. Go—join the company, and I will present thy gallant brother to our kinsmen, Barbara. What—ho—wine here, knaves. Pick thee, my daughter, the fairest out, and the Master of Nithsdale shall claim his partner presently.”

When Selby and his happy wife had left the baron and his unexpected guest together, the old lord filled a stoup of wine, and pledged the heir of Caerlaverock.

“Drink to me, Master Ralph, though by the mass I am half jealous of thee. Thou, than whom a welcomer never crossed the door of Selby Hall, to hide thee like an anchorite, while so many of thy noblest peers were met within these walls?”

“Why, faith, Lord Selby, I would have deemed the visit of an accused traitor a poor compliment to him who had married with my

sister, until I had cleared the slander from my name."

"And in doing it," replied the old baron, "where couldst thou find any who would stand to thee more truly than my kindred and myself?" When the base lie was named, we cleared thy fame, and offered the Selby's sword to maintain the loyalty of the Master of Nithsdale."

"That, my good lord, I know; and that has bound me to my gallant brother. But, noble Selby, I will assert mine innocence where it was maligned; and from James himself demand to be confronted with my accuser."

"Tush, noble Master," said one of the Selbys. "Thou mayest spare thy journey, and spare thy horses. Before the Proclamation was two days old, the knave who gave the information had lost his ears for perjury. Thou and some others whom he denounced, made his story so incredible, that the tale was sifted and found false; and to avoid the rack he mounted the pillory. So strong was men's indignation, and so harshly

was the poor wretch used, that he survived his exposure barely time sufficient to make a fuller confession of his villany."

"And was the information of such a slave deemed enough to warrant this insult to the house of Maxwell?"

"Alas! my dear boy, thou canst not even fancy the consternation which that abominable plot occasioned. Men looked on their neighbours with suspicion; scoundrels profited by the excitement, to increase the general apprehension, and turn it to account. But come—one cup more. The dance waits for us; and if there be beauty in Cumberland, I'll mate thee with a partner. Kinsmen, drink to my guest—deeper yet—drink to my son. What else can the brother of the Border flower be to the father of George Selby?"

Never had a Twelfth-night ball commenced under more inauspicious circumstances, and never had the annual festival of Selby Place a more joyous termination. Long and merrily was the

revelry sustained, and day broke ere the last of the guests had crossed the drawbridge.

* * * * *

“George,” said the beautiful bride, as she sate upon her husband’s knee, and twined his dark ringlets round her snow white fingers. “My heart tells me that I have been wanting in my duty to thee. When Gillian told me that my brother, after four years absence, had arrived, I was so overjoyed to see him, that I acceded thoughtlessly to all he asked. Even *his* secret should not have been concealed from *you*. Some other wanderer may come and scare thy falconer’s wits out. I need no better retirement to offer my devotions in, than that which mine own closet affords. Let then, my love, that distant oratory be locked as it was before I came to Selby Place.”

What the reply was is not recorded; but ere a second twelvemonth passed away, “the Border flower” knelt at the same altar with her hus-

band ; and Barbara Maxwell was the first of that ancient name that conformed to the tenets of the reformers, and renounced the doctrines of the church of Rome.

LIFE IN THE MOUNTAINS.

The time I've lost in wooing,
In watching and pursuing
The light that lies
In woman's eyes,
Has been my heart's undoing.

MOORE.



CHAPTER II.

LIFE IN THE MOUNTAINS.

“WHY then, upon my conscience!” ejaculated Major O’Shaughnessy, who had depressed his person to accommodate himself to the height of the door, and dropped in as the legend of the departed soldier had ended. “You are well employed in reading romances, while wiser men are settling their traps for a march. Because you have got a decent habitation of your own, I suppose you imagine we shall spend our Christmas in the Pyrenees.”

“I suspect, Terence,” replied O’Connor, “our tenure is nearly at an end, and our wooden

dwelling-place will afford shelter, ere long, to some of the brigades in the rear."

"You may swear it," returned O'Shaughnessy. "We have been too long looking the enemy in the face, and far too neighbourly, for things to continue so. At the bridge yonder, the sentries go on and off duty with a bow, and the officers exchange snuff and compliments."

"Well, surely this is better, Terence, than the exterminatory system that our allies and the French keep up. To kill or wound a harmless sentry wantonly is barbarous, and savours more of Indian than European warfare. But what reason have you for supposing that we shall move so soon?"

"I think," rejoined the soldier, "that I can show you a cogent one from the door,"—and he pointed out two long files of men and women, struggling up the face of the Sierra, to a mountain cantonment that occupied the summit of the ridge. They were loaded with provisions carried in baskets on their heads, and appeared

to climb the steep and rugged path with difficulty.

“Think you, friend O’Connor, that the commander will permit the snow to catch him here, when the supplies must depend upon a string of peasants like these to transport them! No, no—we shall soon advance; and it is whispered that fords across the river have been discovered by the Spanish fishermen, and that they have been sounding the bottom, while the French sentries believed they were only looking for flounders.”

“Well, the sooner we’re off the better,” replied O’Connor. “I am anxious to find myself in ‘Beautiful France;’ and much as our present residence has been admired, it would be rather too airy an abode when the snows come down. You dine with us no doubt?”

“You never made a shrewder guess, Ned. The flavour exhaled from your camp-kettle as I passed it, removed every objection. Our larder at home is not extensively provisioned; there is

nothing there that I can see but a goat hung up, which seems to have died of a consumption; and from its lank look, as it dangles from a peg, I have my doubts after all that it is only a Frenchman's knapsack."

Dinner ended, and more than one bottle was emptied. A subaltern reminded O'Shaughnessy that the sequel of his amatory adventures remained untold.

"I can't venture yet. It is too early in the evening to recal these melancholy recollections."

"Well, I should have imagined," said O'Brien, "that the last pull at the canteen had sufficiently fortified you for story-telling. Surely, like myself, you are now love-proof, Terence?"

"Ay, ay, Patt. Thanks to St. Patrick, the day is over when woman could touch this once too tender heart. It is now

Too cold or wise
For brilliant eyes
Again to set it glowing.

But these boys laugh, and I may as well end

my confessions, I suppose. I have suffered, it is true ; but I hope I have borne my disappointments like a Christian man and a stout soldier."

After some entreaty, a long deep sigh, and a longer and deeper draught from a well-filled wineskin, the gallant commander thus continued the narrative of his second disappointment in love.

CONFESSIONS OF A GENTLEMAN WHO
WOULD HAVE MARRIED IF HE COULD.

There's tricks i' the world.

* * * * *

O Heavens ! is't possible a young maid's wits
Should be as mortal as an old man's life ?

HAMLET.

Our wooing doth not end like an old play ;
Jack hath not Jill.

LOVE'S LABOUR LOST.



CHAPTER III.

CONFESSIONS OF A GENTLEMAN WHO
WOULD HAVE MARRIED IF HE COULD.

SECOND CONFESSION.

You may readily imagine that after my recent *escapade*, I was in no hurry to recommence a matrimonial campaign. Biddy Maginn—the devil's luck to her—had given me such a damper, that for six months I would hardly look at an only daughter over a pew, or stare in at the window of a country banker. I was so mortally afraid of women, that I am persuaded, had a priest proposed “the difference,” I should have

embraced him and his offer, and taken it with vows of celibacy. But it was otherwise allotted ; and though men generally escape with one visitation, I was fated to undergo a couple.

I was garrisoned in Dublin. The laugh against me had nearly ceased. I was drilling regularly in the Park, a well-conditioned subaltern as need be, and as the song says,

“ Minding my business, and just as I ought to be,”

when alas ! a letter from an old crony of my mother’s, brought me into fresh trouble.”

I need not tell you exactly what my Lady Featherstone said ; but the gist of her letter was to request that I would, without delay, as I valued future fortune, repair to Bath, and trust my fate to her.


Great men are seldom their own directors ; and for my part, I was in all weighty concerns aided, counselled, and assisted, by my foster-brother and servant, Ulick Flyn. Of course my Lady Featherstone’s epistle was read to him

—for Ulick was a marksman*—and he decided at once that we should try our luck; for, as he said, “Luck’s every thing!” Accordingly, leave was obtained—the paymaster made an advance—and Ulick and I landed safe in Bath, determined to “take fortune at the hop.”

My lady was delighted at my despatch, when next morning I presented myself at her breakfast-table. I shall never forget her. She was full five feet eight, and stiff as a drill sergeant. Thin she was—for Ulick affirmed upon his conscience, “there was not flesh enough upon her bones to bait a rat-trap.” Her maid was sent away—the door was carefully secured—and with a grave and important clearing of the voice, she thus broke the ice and entered on particulars.

“Terence,” says she, “it’s fifteen years since

* *Marksmen*. In Ireland, gentlemen are thus designated who neither read nor write, and whose sign-manual is thus formed :

his
Ulick  Flyn.
mark.

I laid an eye upon you—you were then but a *gossoun*;^{*} but as I told your poor dear mother, if the Lord spared you, you might grow up like your uncle Mick; and Mick was the handsomest lad in Loughrea, when I married my lamented husband, Sir Daniel. I had a steady regard for your mother; she held good cards, played a safe game, and was an excellent woman—though she died fifteen guineas in my debt, and your father never had the decency to answer my letter when I sent in my claim. Had it been a tradesman's bill, of course no gentleman should or would have attended to it; but—it was the night before she died—ten guinea points, and five on the odd rubber. Well, your father should have paid it. He's gone to his account; and God send he hasn't suffered for his neglect of me in the other world!"

"But, my dear madam, I have nothing to do with old play-debts of my mother; nor can I be

* A little boy.

answerable for my father's omissions in answering letters."

"God forbid you should, my dear boy! No, no. I have sent for you,"—and she made a pause.

"For what purpose, madam?"

"To make your fortune," was the reply. "Ay, your fortune, Terence. All money in the funds, and six hundred a year secured upon the best estate in Northamptonshire."

"Then with the fortune I presume there is a lady saddled?"

"And what objection is there to one may I ask, when she can pay for her keeping handsomely. Terence, dear?" quoth my Lady Featherstone.

"Oh, none in the world," I responded.

"Well, then," she continued, "you have no objection to a wife with ten thousand pounds *ready*, and six hundred a year?"

"The Lord forbid I should be so sinful," I replied, "as to repine at the will of Providence, if

such an accident in the way of matrimony befel me ”

“Now, Terence, remember I was your poor mother’s bosom friend, and I am sure I may speak freely to her son.”

I nodded a full affirmative, and my Lady Featherstone looked knowing as a jailer.

“Terence, is it honour bright between us?”

I assured her, as Ollapod says in the play, that “I was full of honour as a corps of cavalry.”

“It’s all right,” rejoined my lady, “and now for business. You must know, Terence, jewel, that I have had the worst of luck the last winter; and every year villanous tradesmen are becoming more intolerable. My rent is due—my last carriage is unpaid—my servants are clamorous for wages, and daily growing more insolent—and, to own the truth, I am afraid to look into my card account, for a mint of money would not clear it off. I must borrow two thousand pounds, or quit Bath in disgrace.”

“Bad enough, madam,” said I.

“Now, Terence, you must lend me the money.”

“*I!* my lady. Where could *I* obtain it? I know of no way possible but by stopping the Bristol mail.”

“No, no, Terence”—quoth the dowager. “We need not resort to such desperate expedients. We do not require taking to the road, when we have only to go to the altar.”

“Ah! I understand your ladyship; but we talk as if success were certain. I may not like the lady, and the lady may not like me.”

“Pshaw!—leave the lady to my management, I will answer for her accepting you.”

“Ay, madam, but I cannot answer for myself. She may be old—ugly—disagreeable.”

“She is none of these,” said Lady Featherstone.

“How old is she?”

“Thirty.”

“I am scarcely twenty-two,” said I.

“And what signifies eight years?” demanded the dowager. “Is there not a clean thousand as a set off against each of them, man?”

“Is she good-looking?”

“Very pleasing both in appearance and manner,” replied my lady.

“Her family?—you know we are particular about that in Ireland.”

“She is sister to a baronet, and of one of the oldest families in Northamptonshire. Come, I am sure I have satisfied every doubt, and you shall meet her here this evening.”

“Why, yes—but there is another question I must trouble you with.”

“And what may that be, my dear Terence?” replied the lady, with a most gracious style.

“In a word, Lady Featherstone, a recent mistake has made me rather particular. She has never had a blast, I hope?”

“*A blast!* what does the man mean?”

“Oh—I beg your ladyship’s pardon. I forgot you were not from Connaught, and the phrase

may be strange to you. In short, my lady, no flaw in her reputation—no kick in her gallop.”

“Blast—flaw—kick in her gallop!” repeated the dowager. “No wonder I can scarcely comprehend you. If you mean to ask if my friend be a person of unblemished character, I beg to assure you, sir, that I associate with none other!”

“A thousand pardons, madam; but to be candid—not six months ago I was within a point of becoming Benedict—and the lady was so provident, that before the third moon waned she would have obliged me with an heir.”

“Indeed! On that score you may be quite at ease. Miss Woodhouse is propriety itself;—and now having given you all the information you demanded, will you oblige me with the loan of two thousand pounds, for which I will pass you a *post-obit* on my personal property?”

“Certainly, my dear lady; and I shall be too happy to find myself in a condition to be serviceable to you.”

“Thank you, Terence; and now I will call

upon Miss Woodhouse, and ask her to tea. She has one little particularity—she never goes out without her maid; and you must make yourself agreeable to the *fille-de-chambre*, for she is an immense favourite with her mistress.”

“Well, madam, and which of the ladies am I to make love to first? Shall I open with *mademoiselle*, or commence with the spider-brusher?”

“An excellent plan to lose both,” returned the dowager. “No, Terence, urge your suit briskly with the mistress, and open your purse-strings freely for the maid. That is the sure game.”

“Egad—a thought strikes me. Pray, as the *soubrette* appears to be rather an important personage, might I request you to favour me with a hasty report upon her age, looks, and inclinations?”

“’Pon my honour,” exclaimed the dowager, “I hardly see the necessity; but I may briefly acquaint you that she is neither a chicken nor a beauty;—she is curious and cunning—fancies, notwithstanding there is a looking-glass in the

lodgings, that men admire her still—and is ten times more solicitous to procure a husband for herself than for her mistress.”

“Then I’ll settle the maid in double quick!”

“Good God! sir, what do you mean?”

“Why nothing, my lady, but that I’ll run my valet, Ulick Flyn, at her.”

“Ah—I understand you. Is he a person on whom we may rely?”

“He is my foster-brother, and true as steel.”

“Smart—good-looking?” pursued the dowager.

“Not a handsomer light-bob in the company.”

“And he will make love to a woman if you desire him?”

“That he will, madam—or if I do not. May I order him to bring my cloak here early?”

“Certainly, and I will take care that Lucy sees him.”

We separated—my lady to invite the bride elect to tea, and I to acquaint my foster-brother with our plan of operations, in which it had been

determined that he should take an important share.

Ulick was overjoyed at the intelligence, and quite ready to enter the field, and carry Miss Florence, as the maid was designated, by sap or storm.

At the proper hour the fosterer* and I moved to the scene of action. Fortunately, a few drops of rain rendered a cloak-bearer necessary; and when we arrived at Lady Featherstone's, and I was ushered to the drawing-room, Ulick Flyn was most politely invited to the lower regions by the dowager's abigail.

I found "the making" of Mrs. O'Shaughnessy already come, and was presented by the hostess as a valued and a valuable gentleman. Lady Featherstone had described my inamorata fairly enough. She was not above the age she had assigned her, and was really good-looking, with a mild expression of countenance almost approach-

* *Hibernice*, for foster-brother.

ing to melancholy. Her manners were affable and polished; and after being half an hour in her company, I came to a conclusion, that there was no cause or impediment to prevent her becoming niece to my honoured relative Mrs. O'Finn.

Indeed matters seemed to progress well, and things "looked like housekeeping." I was very graciously received. The hostess was "mine trusty ally," and my aide-de-camp, Ulick, had safely established himself in the body of the place. The evening passed agreeably; and when the hour to break up had come, Lady Featherstone proposed that as the night was fine and Miss Woodhouse resided in the next street, we should dispense with a coach, and walk home. No objection was made by the lady—the servants were summoned—we bade good night to the dowager, and departed.

There's nothing, my boys, like seeing a woman home, when you want to make love to her. There you have the contact of the arm, and at parting a tender squeeze of the hand. I had certainly the best of fair play during the march.

No one pressed my rear; for when I threw my eye slily back to see if the abigail was within ear-shot, Ulick had her close to his side as the gizzard of a turkey, and they were in deep conversation at the distance of half a street. As I walked off, I overheard her say in a soft tone of entreaty, "Now, Mr. Flyn, you'll be sure to come?" to which, in a tender and insinuating voice, was responded, "Arrah! Miss Lucy, will a duck swim?" and a salutation, loud as the report of a pocket-pistol, was succeeded by an "O fy—how rude you are!" and the hall-door was slammed to.

When safely housed in our inn, I inquired from my fosterer how he had succeeded. The reply was quite satisfactory. He was to drink tea with Miss Lucy next evening; and to use his own words, he would put his *comether** on her. Every syllable touching fortune was correct, and my Lady Featherstone was true as an oracle.

I went to bed. Roger and his regiment was

* *Anglice*, insinuate himself into her good graces.

nothing to Miss Woodhouse, with her ten thousand (minus two), and six hundred a year. How gloriously would I break in upon Mrs. O'Finn, when I presented her with the sister of a baronet—the scion of a stock almost as ancient as our own!

Three days passed. Lady Featherstone played a deep game, Ulick covered himself with glory, and on the following day, as a matter of course, I was to propose and be accepted. The dowager had ascertained from the lady that my suit would be received; and Ulick had so far progressed with the ancient spider-brusher, that she admitted having saved four hundred pounds, acknowledged he was irresistible, and only stipulated that he should quit the army.

“And what will you do, Ulick? I inquired.
“Will you marry Miss Florence?”

“Why then, upon my soul, I won't. Of course your honour and the lady will be married first; and when you're clane off, I'll bolt by a side door and give Miss Lucy the slip. Arrah! master,

sure ye wouldn't have me tie myself to an ould catabaw of her sort. Lord ! she's fifty if she's an hour."

I could not remonstrate, and we retired for the night.

The day "big with the fate" of Terence O'Shaughnessy came. My worthy confederate, the dowager, made the opportunity, and I sighed and was accepted. A fortnight was, after the usual display of maiden coyness, named as the duration of my misery ; and on the expiration of that painful period of celibacy and suffering, Miss Woodhouse would become Mrs. O'Shaughnessy. As to Ulick, he and the *fille-de-chambre* occupied their leisure hours in arranging their future employment. There was but one difference of opinion : my fosterer preferred a farm—the *soubrette* a public-house.

Lady Featherstone was in raptures with our success, assumed a tone towards her servants and tradesmen that for months they had been unaccustomed to, and led the unhappy people to

imagine there was yet a chance that they might ultimately be paid. At a card-party the next night, fortune once more smiled upon her. Twice she held four honours in her hand ; and whenever she cut in, the rubber was her own. As my leave of absence was limited to a month, I found it impossible to commit matrimony and arrange my wife's assets in that short period, and determined to apply to my commanding officer for an extension, and candidly apprise him of the reason of my non-appearance. I did so ; and a very kind letter in reply, acceded to my request, and carried his congratulations.

Four days passed, and ten more would make me Benedict the married man. On both sides preparations for the grand event were making vigorously. Miss Woodhouse had summoned divers dressmakers to her abiding-place ; and I had ordered a wedding garment for the occasion, and not omitted "new liveries" for my man. The Lady Featherstone was the busiest of the whole. Accounts that would have lain *perdu* to

the day of judgment, were examined; a card-party invited for the next week; and even without permission from the coachman, she ordered her carriage for a drive, as if his wages were paid already. Every thing went on swimmingly. Matrimony, after all, was the only safe path to preferment for a younger brother. In the hymeneal wheel, doubtless, there were blanks as well as prizes; but though there were Biddy Maginns—glory to the prophet!—were there not also Amelia Woodhouses!

The following morning I called on my bride elect; but the lady of the bedchamber excused her mistress in not receiving me, on the plea of indisposition. I ascribed it to cold, while Ulick affirmed “the creature was naturally bothered at becoming Mrs. O’Shaughnessy.” My Lady Featherstone made light of the affair. Her dear Amelia was both sensitive and delicate; she feared the unusual flurry of her spirits might render some quiet necessary. In a few days her sweet friend would be quite stout, and in the

mean time she suggested that it would be the more delicate proceeding on my part, to confine my attentions merely to inquiries through my servant. Of course, my Lady Featherstone was in these concerns oracular, and I confided the management of all to her and Ulick Flyn.

But the dowager was not aware that I had now with Amelia a more powerful ally than herself—to wit, the waiting-woman. Miss Florence had become deeply enamoured of Mr. Flyn; and a woman of forty-five, when she loves, loves desperately. With Ulick's shrewdness, every occurrence in the lady's mansion must speedily reach me; and the admission of my man to the domicile of Miss Woodhouse, was as imprudent as permitting a hostile force to establish itself in the citadel of a fortress.

The moon was at the full, and a lovelier night never fell upon the old cathedral, than when I passed it in the way to "mine inn," after losing three guineas at piquet to my Lady Featherstone.

Her darling Amelia's cold was better. The truth was, she had been a little feverish; but to prevent unnecessary alarm, she had confined herself to her own room. In a day or two she would be in the drawing-room, and at the appointed time I would be blest with her hand, and of course made too happy.

This was indeed gratifying news. I sauntered homeward communing with my own thoughts touching the disposition of a part of the eight thousand. At the corner of a street a fraction of a boy addressed me, to say that he had left my wedding-clothes at home. I gave the urchin half-a-crown; and the young tailor betook himself to an alehouse, and I to dream of approaching happiness.

With some difficulty I was admitted to my own room. Ulick closed the door carefully, and on a hasty inspection I perceived our traps were being packed, and all in preparation for an immediate move.

“Why, Ulick, what the devil’s in the wind? Surely you are taking time by the forelock, in packing for our march.”

With that provoking *sang froid*, which an Irishman, even in desperate cases, delights to indulge in, Ulick proceeded leisurely in folding and depositing the coat in my portmanteau, as he coolly replied,

“Surely it’s time to get the kit together when the route comes!”

“Why, what do you mean? I’m not to be married these four days.”

“No,” responded the fosterer, “nor for four after that, unless you marry my Lady Featherstone. May bad fortune attend her, the dirty ould canister, night and day!”

“Speak out, man. What has happened—has Miss Woodhouse changed her mind?”

“Not that I know of,” replied Mr. Flyn.

“Is there a national bankruptcy?—for her money is in the funds.”

“If there is, I didn’t hear it.”

“Is she dead?”

“Maybe she died within this half-hour.”

“Come”—and I lowered my voice—“out with it, man. I guess the cause of her seclusion. Is she as ladies wish to be?”

“Arrah! Bedershin. Is it takin away the crature’s character ye are?”

“D——n Ulick, you’ll drive me mad. What is the matter? She’s not dead—not broke—not blasted?”

“But”—and the valet made a long pause—
“She’s mad!”

“Mad!”

“Mad as a hatter!”

“Mad as a hatter? Go on, man!”

“Well, I must stop the packing, and tell you the story,” replied Mr. Flyn.

“I was taking tea as usual with Miss Lucy and tender as she has been always, she was never half so tender as to-night. ‘Ulick,’ says she, for as I intended to bolt, I was, you know, civiller than ever. ‘I never thought I would have

loved mortal man as I do you.’—‘Ah! then, Lucy,’ says I, ‘I think it’s grammary ye have thrown over me; for if the world was sarched from Killarney to Giberalter, I’ll take my book-oath the woman couldn’t be found to plase me like yourself.’—‘Ulick,’ says she, ‘you sodgers arn’t loaded with money; and I don’t see why you and I should not be nate and dacent at our weddin, like the captain and my mistress. There’s a few trifles in the way of a present, and sure you’ll not like them the worse for coming from me;’—and Mr. Flyn pointed to a huge bundle of miscellaneous garments, the gift of the enamoured *fille-de-chambre*.

“Well,” continued the fosterer, “to be sure I thanked her like a gentleman. ‘Agh, Ulick,’ says she, ‘will you ever desave me?’—‘Desave you, astore!’ said I. ‘Arrah, who could look at that beautiful countenance of your own, and not be true as a clock, and constant as a turtle?’—‘Ogh,’ says she, ‘I’ll niver know pace till you’re mine, Ulick! I wish my poor mistress may be

well enough! but I am sorely afraid we'll have to put back the weddin for a week.'—'Oh—blur-a-nouns!' says I, 'take my life at once, but don't kill me by inches. Do you tell me I must be ten days more without my charmer, and that's yourself?'—'Ah, Ulick, if you only knew the cause; but I'll tell ye every thing when we're married,' says she. By Saint Patrick, I smelled a rat! 'There's a secret,' says I to myself, 'as sure as the devil's in Bannagher; and if blarney will get it out of ye, my ould girl, I'll have it before we separate.' Well, there's no use in tellin ye what I said, forby what I done, but I fairly smothered her with civility. 'Ogh,' says she, 'my darlin'—and she put her arm round my neck—her fist is as big as my own, and as yallow as a kite's claw. 'My poor lady takes quare notions in her head.'—'Does she?' says I. 'Maybe,' says Miss Flounce, 'matrimony may cure them.'—'Faith, and maybe it may. But Lucy, dear, what kind of notions do ye mane?' 'Agh, that would be tellin,' says she. 'So you

wouldn't trust me, Lucy? Well, see the difference between us. I couldn't keep any thing from you, even if it was the killin of a man'—and I gave her a look of reproachful tenderness that a hathen couldn't stand. 'Jewel,' says she, as she smothered me with kisses, 'I can refuse ye nothing. Well then—but it's a dead sacret—my mistress is at times a little eccentric.'—'Eccentric!' says I, 'what's that?'—'Why,' says she, 'she labours under quare delusions.'—'Phew!' says I, 'she has, what we call in Connaught, rats in her garret!'—'I don't understand you,' says she, 'but the fact is, for a few days in every month her intellects are unsettled.'—'Is it a pleasant sort of madness, Lucy? Does your mistress amuse herself with the poker—break windows—throw bottles?'—'Oh, no. Poor soul, she is quite harmless, and all she requires is a little humouring, and no contradiction. One time she fancies she is dead, and then we let her lie in state, and make preparations for her funeral. At another she imagines that she has an engagement

at the Opera ; then we hire a fiddler, and allow her to dance off the fit. Last month she believed herself a teapot ; and this one she thinks she is a canary. I suppose her approaching marriage has put the fancy in her head ; for she sent for a cabinet-maker on Monday, and bespoke a breeding-cage.'—' A taypot !' said I, as I made the sign of the cross.—' Pshaw,' says she, ' it's very harmless after all. The captain won't mind it, when he's accustomed to it.'—' Feaks ! and I have doubts about that ; for men don't marry to make tay, Lucy.'—' But,' says she, ' Ulick, don't let mortal know that I have told you any thing, and particularly your master. He'll find it out time enough !'—and the old harridan laughed heartily. ' He little thinks, poor fellow, he is to occupy the corner of a breeding-cage.'—' Ye may say that with your own purty mouth,' says I. ' Come, Ulick, dear, I must go to the mistress and lave ye. Keep up your spirits—a week will soon pass over—and then maybe I won't be your own lawful wife.' The devil a truer word ever she

said. ‘Go, darlin’—and giving me this watch and a brace of kisses, I lifted my bundle, and she let me out by the back door.”

I was thunderstruck. What a deep plot that of the infernal Jezebel, the dowager’s, was! To obtain two thousand pounds, she would have sacrificed me to a maniac. What a pleasant time I should have had—every month, at the full of the moon, to have to send for a fiddler or a coffin-maker, after receiving the pipe of a teapot at the hymeneal altar! What was to be done? Nothing, but what Ulick had already provided for—a retreat without sound of trumpet!

The packing was accordingly continued, and it was now no sinecure. My bridal outfit, which luckily I had money enough to pay for, made an important addition to my wardrobe; while Mr. Flyn, whose personal effects had arrived in Bath very conveniently packed in a hatbox, was obliged to purchase a couple of trunks to transport “the trifles,” as he termed them, which had been presented him by the lovesick spider-brusher.

To quit Bath and not convey my acknowledgments to Lady Featherstone, would have been uncivil, and I favoured her with a few lines. I declined the honour she intended in uniting me to a teapot ; and as confinement to a cage might not agree with me, I authorized her to provide another mate for the fair canary. I delegated to her the task of delivering my parting compliments to Miss Woodhouse ; and at the request of Mr. Flyn, entreated, that “when her hand was in,” she would bid a tender farewell to Miss Flounce, and acquaint her that he would return and claim her hand on “Tib’s eve”—an Irish festival, which is stated to occur “neither before nor after Christmas.” A short postscript desired her not to trouble herself in preparing the *post obit*, until she heard from me again.

Well, you may be assured that Ulick and I, notwithstanding the salubrity of the city, did not think it prudent to extend our visit. Before the reveillée beat next morning, we were both perched upon the roof of a London stage-coach. I cer-

tainly had no reason to plume myself on the success of the expedition, and I returned to town, dull as a wet Sunday. The fosterer, however, was in high glee, and all the way up carolled like a nightingale. The difference was, that my attempt at the commission of matrimony had nearly been my ruin, while Ulick was "made up for life." He had been fed "like a fighting cock"—was proprietor of a silver watch—and, "tatteration to him! but he had more shirts than the sergeant-major, and more handkerchiefs than the colonel himself."

"Well, gentlemen, what think you of my second attempt to obtain a wife?"

"Bold, certainly, though not so fortunate as your merits deserved," replied O'Connor. "But, Terence, did you ever hear how the ladies bore their desertion?"

"The canary-bird, I believe, with Christian resignation—but a laughing hyena was nothing to the lady of the bedchamber. The dowager, rendered desperate by my levanting, attempted

to excuse herself to Miss Woodhouse, and prove that she was no participator in the flight of the false one; but she could not even obtain an audience, as Miss Flounce slammed the door in her face. Unable to hold her ground any longer, she was literally dunned out of Bath, after having instructed in the art of book-keeping half the tradesmen [in the town.]”

“And what,” said Captain Paget, “became of honest Ulick?”

Major O’Shaughnessy sighed deeply.

“He lies in a trench before the curtain of La Trinidad. In love he was a faithful counsellor, and in battle always at my side. When the light division assaulted Badajoz, I was wounded in the head and body while scrambling up the breach. A stout arm prevented me from falling—a kind voice told me to “cheer up!” It was my poor fosterer—and the words were the last he uttered. A bullet passed through his heart, and we rolled together into the ditch. When I volunteered to lead the assault that night, Ulick joined the

forlorn hope and accompanied me. Through life we had never been a day apart—storm and sunshine fell upon us together. God rest thee, Ulick! a braver soldier never screwed a bayonet, nor a more faithful servant followed the humble fortunes of an Irish gentleman than thyself!”

The major wiped away a tear, bade us a good night, and retired to his own hut.

“Poor Terence! It is a warm-hearted animal after all,” said O’Brien. “He never speaks of his fosterer without being affected. I knew him for years, and a more attached fellow to a master never lived than Ulick. How goes time? Pshaw!—not nine o’clock. Is there any brandy in the flask? O’Shaughnessy has a desperate thirst upon him while recounting those amatory mishaps, and he applied to the canteen repeatedly.”

“Faith!” replied one of the subalterns, “he has made a deep inroad upon the Cognac. But, major, do you recollect the conversation we had concerning that mysterious affair at ——?”

“Yes, and I promised to tell you the particulars. Have we time for it now?”

“Oh, yes,” responded several voices.”

“Well, I will not delay you, but make the story as brief as I can.”

He said—and thus commenced.

THE MAJOR'S STORY.

And heedless as the dead are they
Of aught around, above, beneath ;
As if all else had passed away,
They only for each other breathe.

* * *

Who that hath felt that passion's power,
Or paused, or feared, in such an hour ?
PARASINA.

Yes—Leila sleeps beneath the wave.

* * *

My wrath is wreak'd—the deed is done—
And now I go—but go alone.
THE GIAOUR.



CHAPTER IV.

THE MAJOR'S STORY.

“THERE is more romance,” said Major O’Connor, “in real life, than in any fiction which the novelist can imagine, and few men have journeyed through existence long, and not encountered something touching on the marvellous. I never was a sentimental adventurer, and yet I have in my time met with strange occurrences. In the story I am about to tell, I was an inferior actor—and of the other parties, one was a lieutenant in the same company, and the lady I had seen, although I had never been acquainted with her intimately.

At the time, when the transaction occurred I was a subaltern in the 8—th. The regiment was quartered in a large garrison-town in the south of Ireland, and I had been for three months on leave. On rejoining, I was presented at dinner to an officer who had come to us from another corps, and was struck with his appearance and address. He was a remarkably handsome man—at times a little of the puppy ; but when he pleased, his manners were very agreeable, and his conversation lively and amusing. As we were both in the light company, we were a good deal thrown together, and hence I became more intimate with Clinton than any officer in the regiment.

As the garrison was very full, and the barrack undergoing repairs, most of us were obliged to live out at private lodgings. Clinton and I were cantoned in the same house, and had separate apartments, with a drawing-room in common. We breakfasted, and generally had coffee together in the evening. By degrees—for my companion

was in some matters exceedingly reserved—we became more intimate. Gradually he became communicative. Much of what he was doing came under my observation; and I was soon aware, from many circumstances I noticed, that he was engaged in an intrigue.

The house we lodged in was in the suburbs of the town, remotely situated, but not very distant from our barrack. After mess we were in the habit of returning home tolerably early; for we had some desperate hard-goers in the regiment, and if a man commenced another bottle after the stipulated dinner wine was drunk, it was almost impossible to get clear of the late sitters before daylight. My companion, when at home, always left a small portion of the window-shutter unclosed—this signal was understood; for almost every night, and at a particular hour, sand was thrown against the glass, and Clinton went out to converse with an old woman wrapped closely in a gray cloak. I remarked her frequently, but never obtained a glimpse of her features, from

the pains she took to conceal them from my view. She was, no doubt, an emissary of Cupid; for Clinton had generally a note or letter to peruse or answer, when he returned from his interviews with the old woman.

Sometimes, in place of a written reply, he followed the messenger directly. On these occasions he always took his sword, and muffled himself in a large blue cloak that belonged to me, which, from its size and colour, was better adapted to conceal the person than his own.

Clinton and I in age, height, and figure, were exceedingly alike. We both wore light-infantry uniforms, and at night might be readily mistaken for each other. Twice the old woman, when waiting for Clinton, addressed me in mistake; and I had repeatedly, when returning after dinner, been dogged almost to the door of my lodgings, by a man wrapped in a drab great-coat such as the lower classes of the Irish wear, and which, from its loose make, renders the figure very indis-

ting. The frequency of the occurrence roused my curiosity—I strove to ascertain who the person was, under whose espionage I seemed placed, but I never could succeed. He always kept some distance in the rear—if I walked quickly, he mended his pace—if I loitered, he sauntered after me—if I halted, he stopped—in short, he regulated his movements by mine, and always avoided coming to close quarters. One thing struck me as being very singular—whenever I wore my own cloak, I was certain of being watched to the very door.

It was the evening before the catastrophe. The general had dined with us, and I had remained later at the mess-table than usual. It was good starlight, for there was no moon. That morning, in passing a cutler's shop, it occurred to me, from the constancy with which I was haunted by the unknown, that some outrage was intended against my person, and I thought it prudent to be prepared. I accordingly went in, and had my sabre ground and pointed. On this

evening I had my own cloak and sword; and before I cleared the first street, observed that as usual I was closely followed. Stimulated by wine, and conscious of possessing an effective weapon, I determined to bring my pursuer to action; and halting silently beneath a garden-wall where the road made a sudden turn, I waited for the enemy to close.

A minute brought us into contact. He turned the corner of the fence, and finding me ready to receive him, sprang back two paces.

"Stand!" I shouted, as I unsheathed my sabre, "Stand! or I'll cut you down!"

"Back!" he replied, "or by Heaven I'll blow your brains out"—and I saw him present a pistol, which he had drawn from underneath his coat. We stood within a few yards of each other for some moments in a threatening attitude—I was the first to break silence, by demanding why he dared to follow me?

"To warn you to desist," returned a deep and disguised voice.

“Desist!” I exclaimed. “What am I to desist from?”

“The pursuit of one you never shall obtain!” was the reply.

“You are under some mistake.”

“I am not,” returned the unknown. “You have eluded my vigilance twice, and met her you best know where. Attempt it a third time—and your fate is sealed!”

“I tell you, fellow, you are in error.”

“No—no—Mr. Clinton, you are —”

“My name is not Clinton.”

“Damnation! Have I been mistaken? May I inquire whom it is I talk to?” he replied.

“I am called O’Connor, and —”

“You lodge in the same house with —”

“Precisely so.”

“Strange!” he muttered. “I would have sworn it. Height, cloak, figure—Ha! I see how they escaped me. I was on the wrong scent, and they seized that opportunity of meeting.

Pray, sir, have you been ever watched home before?"

"Yes, a dozen times. If I am pursued again, I'll shoot the man that follows me."

"You had better leave that alone. It is a trade that two can work at"—he replied coldly. "But you will not be incommoded again. A hunter with the game afoot, will not turn from it to run a drag, I fancy. Farewell, sir. If you regard your comrade's safety, tell him to avoid the elm-tree walk in the churchyard. He has been there twice too often—he will understand you perfectly. Good night, sir."

"Stop, friend. You have frequently escorted me home, I think I shall return the compliment."

"Indeed?"—he replied with a sneer. "If you are ambitious of heaven, and wish to make a vacancy in the 8—th, I would recommend a trial of that experiment. Go to your lodgings, boy. I have no wish to harm you, though

I hate every man that wears your livery as I hate the devil. Go—once more, good night.”

He turned round the angle of the wall. A momentary surprise prevented me from following for a time. When I did he was fifty paces off, and presently appeared to vanish from my sight. I walked rapidly after; and when I reached the spot where he disappeared, found it a narrow passage between two garden walls. I looked down the opening—it was dark as midnight—I listened—his footsteps had died away—it was useless to follow—I gave up the pursuit and returned to my lodgings.

Clinton was there before me.

“You are late to-night,” he said. “Have you been serenading your mistress; or, like unhappy me, waiting impatiently for the messenger of Cupid?”

“Serenading I have not been,” I replied; “but I have been conversing probably with the messenger of Cupid—if the aforesaid courier wears

a frieze great-coat, and delivers his commands with a cocked pistol."

"Indeed! What do you mean?"

"Why, that I have been mistaken for you—followed, until I got tired of being pursued; and when I turned on the scoundrel, found I had but caught a Tartar."

"Go on, my dear fellow," said Clinton.

"I forced him to a parley, and he proved to be better provided for battle than myself. In short, we parted as we met. In the dusk, it seemed, he mistook me; and when the error was ascertained, he gave me a pleasant message for you, with an injunction to deliver it."

Clinton eagerly demanded what its import was; I repeated, as nearly as I could remember it, the threatening language of the stranger.

"It is indeed a singular business altogether, George. I must make you my confidant, and in the morning will show you the lady, and afterwards acquaint you with a strange story. What said he about our meetings?"

“That they had occurred twice; and if you valued life, to desist from a third attempt, and avoid the elm-tree walk in the churchyard.”

“Well,” replied Clinton, “to-morrow you shall know more. It is late; and as we are to have a field day, the sooner we are in bed the better.”

We took our candles and separated.

The garrison review occupied the whole of the next morning; and it was scarcely over, when I was obliged to go on the main guard. About two o'clock Clinton came to me, and asked me to walk out with him. I put on my cap, and we strolled arm in arm into the town.

“George,” he said, “I am so thoroughly convinced of your prudence, that I am going to intrust you with my secret. I require the advice and assistance of a friend, and you are the one I would wish to confide in.”

I assured him that if secrecy were necessary, he might be certain of my discretion—and he continued:

“I find myself surrounded with difficulties—I would almost say danger; but rather than abandon the affair, I would risk life freely. Would you wish to see the lady?”

“Faith! Clinton,” I replied, “I have no small curiosity to see a person who has been the cause of placing me under the espionage of as truculent a gentleman, as ever man conversed with in a retired lane at midnight.”

“It shall be gratified,” he said. “Do you observe yonder shop? It is the second from the corner of the street.”

“A linendraper’s?”

“Exactly so,” he replied.

“Well, what next?”

“Go in—look for a handsome girl. There are several women attending in the shop; but it is impossible to mistake Agnes. Make any excuse—ask for gloves—pocket-handkerchiefs—any thing that will give you an opportunity of seeing and speaking to her. You will find me waiting for you at the confectioner’s.”

He pointed out the place where I should find him, and I proceeded to see a fair one, who had already placed me two feet only from the muzzle of a loaded pistol.

I looked above the door, and the name inscribed upon the show-board was a Quaker's. I entered the shop—several starched and steady women were behind the counter—but none of them were of the sort whose charms could endanger the personal safety of any man. Was Clinton jesting with me? At the moment when I was deliberating whether I should not retire at once, a party of ladies came in. Immediately the shopwomen were engaged in attending to them; and one retiring to a door that opened on an inner apartment, said, in a voice that I overheard, “Agnes! thou art required here.”

My eyes were instantly turned to the place whence the fair inamorata might be expected—and presently she appeared. I was almost struck dumb with astonishment. A lovelier face than hers I never looked at!

Many a year has passed away, but I shall never forget that beauteous girl. She was scarcely nineteen—tall, and notwithstanding the formality of her costume, the roundness of her arm, and the symmetry of her waist and bosom, could not be concealed. Her eyes were hazel, with an expression of extreme gentleness. Her hair, Madonna-like, was parted on the forehead; but the simple cap could not hide the profusion of its silken tresses. The outline of the face was strictly Grecian—the complexion pale and delicate—while the “ripe red lip” formed a striking contrast in its hue, and seemed as if “some bee had stung it newly.”

I was perfectly fascinated; and were any thing wanted to make her irresistible, her voice was so musical, so modulated, that “the listener held his breath to hear.” For a quarter of an hour I dallied under various pretexts in the shop; and when at last I could not find a fresh apology for further delay, I came away fully convinced that I had never seen an angel until now.

Clinton was at the confectioner's, and we left it together.

"Have you seen Agnes?" he inquired.

"I have seen the sweetest girl in Ireland," was my reply.

"Is she not worth loving, George?" he said.

"Worth loving? For one smile I would walk barefoot to the barrack; and a kiss would more than repay a pilgrimage to Mecca."

"Faith! I half repent my having exposed you to her charms, the impression appears to have been so powerful," said Clinton, with a laugh. "But I must tell you a long tale to-night. I cannot dine at mess to-day; there are strangers invited, and I could not steal off in time. I have ordered something at home; and when you return from the barracks at night I shall be waiting up, and we can have a confidential *tête-à-tête*. Here come some of our fellows, and I shall be off. Adieu—you will be home before eleven."

"I shall be with you as soon as I can leave the table without observation."

We parted—he on business of his own, and I to visit the guard.

The party at the mess was large, for we had an unusual number of guests at dinner. The band was in attendance—the wine circulated freely—and notwithstanding my anxiety to leave the room, it was almost twelve before I could accomplish it. I visited my guard, and then set out to keep my appointment with my friend Clinton.

The evening had been close, not a breeze moved a leaf, and there was that sullen heaviness in the atmosphere which generally precedes a change of weather. Now the night had altered—sudden gusts moaned along the street, and doors and windows clattered. A storm was coming fast, and I hurried along to reach home before the rain began.

I had no apprehension of being followed. I looked back—no one but myself was afoot, and my old pursuer had deserted me. I passed the lane where I had met him last night. No one

was there, and I reached my lodgings unmolested.

Fitzpatrick, my servant, was sitting up. I inquired for Clinton, and to my surprise was told that he had not returned since he had gone out at dusk. Had he eloped with the fair Quaker? It must be so. Well—that was easily ascertained—for he would require some clothes and his dressing-case. I took up the candles and went to his room. All there was undisturbed; his toilet as it always was, and his portmanteaus in their accustomed places. It was indeed surprising! He might have had an evening interview with Agnes—but to remain till midnight—the thing was impossible. I was lost in a confusion of suppositions, and at last rang the bell, and inquired from Fitzpatrick when Mr. Clinton had been last at home?

The answer was not satisfactory. My own servant informed me that at eight o'clock, when he was engaged in folding some uniforms, my companion had entered the apartment, taken my

pistols, examined the loading and primings carefully, put them in his pocket, wrapped my cloak around him, and telling Fitzpatrick to say that he would be home at ten, left the house.

I was very uneasy—I feared something disastrous — strange misgivings flashed over my mind, and the warning of the formidable stranger was not forgotten. I could not delay longer, for I was obliged to return to the guard-room. All I could do was to leave a message for my friend, and tell him he might expect me at an early breakfast.

The rain was now falling heavily—the wind was louder and more gusty—Clinton had taken my cloak, and I put on a large coat that covered my uniform, and started for the main guard. A wilder night could scarcely have come on so rapidly; and as the clouds careered quickly across the new moon, the darkness at times was nearly impenetrable. My route to the barracks was by that remote and unfrequented lane; and as I entered it, I confess the *éclaircissement* on the

preceding evening with the gentleman in the frieze coat was rather a pleasurable recollection.

I hurried along the lone and gloomy passage, and came to the corner of the garden-wall, where I had awaited and confronted the unknown. A few paces forward he and I had held our brief and threatening colloquy. I wheeled round the wall. By Heaven! there he was—the same gray-coated man—the same tall and gloomy-looking stranger!

In an instant my sabre was unsheathed, and as rapidly on his part a pistol presented.

“How now?” I exclaimed. “Why are you here to-night? Advance a step, and I’ll cleave you to the chin!”

“Pish! boy—keep your threats for those who fear them. I mean you no ill; that is, if you do not draw my vengeance on you by some silly indiscretion.”

“What do you want?” I replied. “You labour under no mistake to-night.”

“Oh—no!” he returned coldly. “Mistakes touching the identity of your friend are ended.”

“Why do you stop me then?”

“Merely to ask a question or two, and assure you that if you walk the lane till doomsday, he who confronts you now will never lay his foot upon it afterwards.”

“And what is that to me? I shall come better prepared to-morrow. You have an advantage in your weapons. Put fire-arms aside—I will throw away my sword—and let the best man be the conqueror.”

He laughed hoarsely.

“Foolish boy! I do not question your manhood, and I am not here to try your mettle. I came to ask a question, and bid you farewell. Did you deliver my message to your friend?”

“Now, in the devil’s name!” I exclaimed, as his cool audacity irritated my temper. “What right have you to demand any thing from me, or suppose that I would reply to your inquiries?”

“I have no right,” replied the stranger; “nor do I ask it but as a favour. If you have no reason for refusing a reply, I beg it in mere courtesy.”

“Courtesy !” I exclaimed. “Strange courtesy, when men converse with naked swords and cocked pistols.”

“’Tis the last time, young man, that I shall ever cross your path. Your gay companion is doubtless revelling at his mess, or, happier yet, locked in beauty’s arms.”

There was a devilish expression in the latter portion of the stranger’s remark, that struck me with a creeping horror, which I cannot describe.

“I do not understand you,” I replied. “Wherever my friend is, I trust he is in safety.”

“Oh—safe he is—I’ll be surety for that. Will you, however, oblige me with a reply to my question? Did you deliver him the message I confided to you? Remember, I ask an answer as a compliment.”

“I did.”

“Humph ! he was warned then ! How did he receive the warning ?”

“As any brave man should treat an idle threat—with the contempt it merited.”

“Indeed?”—and there was a demoniac emphasis on the word as it seemed to hiss from between his lips. A strong suspicion of foul play flashed across my mind, and I felt half assured that Clinton had been ill-used.

“I fear that you have wronged him,” I said. “If so, he has friends that will assert his quarrel.”

“Well, I must abide their vengeance. But you are wrong. He is at this moment sleeping in the arms of beauty.”

“I disbelieve you. If you have wronged him—”

“Pshaw ! how incredulous you are”—rejoined the stranger. “Ask him the particulars to-morrow, and every word he tells you I will admit as fact. Adieu—it is the last time you and I shall ever meet !”

“Stay, you must not—shall not go.”

“Pish—silly boy ! I have fire-arms, you have none. Were we unarmed, I would toss you over that wall, if you were fool enough to tease me by being troublesome.”

As before—he wheeled suddenly round the corner—a horse was waiting for him—he jumped upon his back, waved his hand, and in a second was out of sight !

I was perfectly confounded. What was I to do? I dare not betray the secret of my friend ; and yet I was desperately alarmed for his safety. Was there no middle course? I determined to confide my fears to a companion, and hurried to the guard-room to communicate as much of my apprehensions to the senior officer as I might do, without compromising Clinton's secret.

Douglas, from the confused and imperfect story that mine was, where so much of the affair was necessarily concealed, was quite unable to advise me. I sent a soldier twice to our lodgings, to inquire if my friend had returned ; but he brought back intelligence of his continued absence, and at daybreak I proceeded to the house myself, to try whether I could discover any cause for his mysterious disappearance. My fears were only heightened, and his servant was now se-

riously alarmed for his master's safety. Again we examined his chamber—unlocked his portmanteaus—opened his drawers ;—not an article was missing—every thing remained in its usual place, and it was quite clear, that when he left the house on the preceding evening, he had taken nothing away save my cloak and pistols.

Three hours passed, but no tidings of the absentee. I wrote a note to the colonel, stated the strange circumstances of Clinton's disappearance, and obtained his permission to leave the guard before the relief-hour came. I hardly knew in what direction I should first proceed, or from whom I should make inquiries. I walked into the town, intending to look into the Quaker's shop, and try if I could see Agnes there. I reached the street—a crowd was about the house, and there was evidently something wrong. I mixed among the throng, and learned from one of the idlers that the Quaker's beautiful shopwoman had left home the preceding evening, and as she had not returned, some thought she had met with

an accident, and others said she had only run away. The last conjecture I felt persuaded was the true one. My fears for Clinton's safety vanished—the absence of both was easily accounted for—my imprudent companion had persuaded the fair Quaker to accompany him, and an elopement was the result. It was useless to ask any questions. Before evening, it was probable that Clinton would return, or acquaint me where he was concealed; and with a load of uneasiness removed from my mind, I turned my footsteps towards the barrack, to resume my guard, and be ready for the relief.

I entered the gate, when the sentry called out, “Sergeant of the guard, here's Lieutenant O'Connor!”

The man addressed ran out—

“Lord! sir, they are looking for you in all directions. Your cloak has been found on the banks of the river. They say Mr. Clinton is drowned, and all the gentlemen and half the regiment are away to look for him.

I was unexpectedly horror-stricken. The mysterious language and dark hints the stranger used, coupled with the disappearance of the Quaker girl, assured me that some dreadful calamity had befallen the unhappy lovers. I took the direction where I observed some soldiers moving; and at the distance of half a mile, a group of red coats and civilians were collected on the banks, and busily employed in dragging the river.

I ran at speed, and was quickly on the spot. Twenty voices pronounced my name, and the crowd made way for me. Colonel Hope was surrounded by a dozen officers; and a soldier beside him held a cloak that I recognised to be my own, while in the hands of another I perceived my pistols.

“O’Connor,” said the colonel, “your fears for Clinton will prove too true. Are these yours?”—and he pointed to the weapons.

I replied in the affirmative, and we walked a few paces from the crowd.

"I dread that our ill-fated companion is not far from the spot where they were found."

"I am persuaded," I answered, "that his body is in the river; and God grant his be the only one! Under what circumstances were those things discovered?"

"The cloak," replied the colonel, "lay carelessly upon the bank, as if it had been thrown off for some sudden purpose. The pistols were found in the next field."

"Pray let me examine them. They were loaded when Clinton took them, and the charge a singular one. I could not find balls in the case, and my servant cut a musket-bullet into quarters, and two slugs were put into each barrel."

The weapons were brought. On examination it was clear that neither had been discharged, and the divided bullet was found exactly as I described it.

Our attention was called to the search making in the river. A cry arose among the soldiers that the drag had fastened. More hands seized

the rope—something heavy came gradually up—and before it touched the surface, female garments were discernible. Next moment the body of the beautiful Quaker was drawn out, and laid upon the bank. An exclamation of horror burst from the crowd, and all rushed forward to gaze upon a countenance that yesterday had teemed with life and loveliness, and whose beauty even death could scarcely diminish. Her dress was not in the least deranged—the simple bonnet was tied beneath the chin—the gloves were on her hands—not a ribbon was displaced—not a pin seemed wanting. From all appearances, our surgeon supposed that she had been twelve hours in the water. That luckless cloak of mine was thrown over the departed beauty, and we recommenced a search for our missing comrade.

I recollected the sarcastic remark of the unknown, when he alluded to the absence of poor Clinton, and asserted that at that time he “might be locked in beauty’s arms.” Where the Quaker’s body had been lying, I suspected that of my ill-

starred companion would be discovered ; and my conjecture was soon verified, for a few casts of the iron raised Clinton's lifeless corpse !

Like the body of the sweet victim who lay beside him, no indication of violence was visible on the soldier's. His uniform was uninjured, and not a button torn away. Death had not been inflicted by a plunderer ; for a valuable ring was on the finger, and a watch and note-case in the pocket when the body was recovered. The hat alone was wanting ; and on the following day it was found in a millpond, whither it had been carried by the stream.

The whole affair was involved in a deep and impenetrable mystery. There were no marks upon the bodies—no traces of a recent struggle visible on the river-bank. The night had not been so dark, that the unhappy couple could have accidentally fallen in ; and if they had, Clinton was an excellent swimmer. That Agnes had any acquaintance with the drowned soldier, beyond what his calling often at the shop pro-

duced, was unknown to her friends and family. On searching her drawers no letter or note was found; and Clinton's private papers, many of them billet-doux, threw no light upon the transaction. There was one sealed packet of considerable size found in his writing-desk, with an endorsement, "To be burned when I am dead"—and in accordance with the wish expressed upon the envelope, it was immediately committed to the flames.

It was also a strange circumstance that nobody save myself had seen or encountered the man in the frieze coat, who had so frequently dogged me to my lodgings. Of course I left the house—for it would have painfully reminded me of my unfortunate companion. But though I remained for some months afterwards in the garrison, I never, from that fatal night, met any person having the slightest resemblance to the unknown.

I need not be tedious. I shall pass over the sensation poor Clinton's death occasioned among us, and the general sympathy the untimely fate

of the beautiful Agnes elicited from all who had seen or known her. At the inquest nothing was elicited connected with the cause of their deaths; and the bodies, followed by an immense concourse, were conveyed away. Clinton's, of course, was carried to the barrack, and that of the gentler sufferer was removed to the dwelling of her kindred.

By a strange accident the funerals occurred at the same time, and the processions crossed each other. One, with the unpretending simplicity of the sect she belonged to, seemed stealing quietly from the scenes of busy life, to seek that "end of all men"—the grave. The other, accompanied by all the parade that marks the interment of a soldier—the dead march pealing from the band—the firing party before the coffin—the regiment following with slow and measured step—moved to the cathedral, in whose cemetery Clinton's last resting-place had been prepared. The service of the dead was ended—thrice the volley of his own company rolled over their departed

comrade—the earth rattled on the escutcheon that bore his name—the grave was filled—the music of the dead changed to a merry quick-step—and Clinton, in military parlance, was forgotten !

“ And,” asked a young lieutenant, “ was that foul and fearful deed never brought to light ? ”

“ Never ” —replied O'Connor. “ With the dead themselves the secret appeared to rest. Many years have since passed over, and nothing has ever transpired which could solve the mystery.”

“ Was a rigid inquiry instituted ? ”

“ Yes ; but all efforts failed. By degrees the wonder ceased, other local violences occurred, the interest gradually abated, and that double murder—for murder assuredly it was—is now only spoken of like those wild deeds of blood, which the Irish peasant delights on a winter night to listen to. But 'tis late—to bed, lads. We march by cock-crow.”

In less than half an hour every sound was still,

save the deep breathing of those who occupied the bivouac. It told that those it sheltered were sleeping more soundly on their truss of straw, than many a careworn head which pressed a downy pillow.



ENTRANCE INTO FRANCE — BATTLES OF
THE BIDASSOA AND THE NIVELLE.

Night closed around the conqueror's way,
And lightnings show'd the distant hill,
Where those who fought that dreadful day,
Stood few and faint, but fearless still!

* * * * *

Many a heart that now beats high,
In slumber cold at night shall lie.

MOORE.



CHAPTER V.

ENTRANCE INTO FRANCE — BATTLES OF
THE BIDASSOA AND THE NIVELLE.

AT midnight, on the 6th of October, the British divisions got silently under arms. A storm was raging furiously — thunder was pealing round them — lightning in quick and vivid flashes flared across the murky sky — the elemental uproar was reverberated among the Alpine heights — and a wilder night was never chosen for a military operation. Gradually the tempest exhausted its fury — the wind fell — the rain ceased — an overwhelming heat succeeded, and when the morning

broke, the leading brigades, at seven different points, plunged into the Bidassoa ; while a rocket rose from the ancient steeple of Fontarabia, and the signal was answered by a combined movement from the heights, of all the divisions there drawn up in order of battle.

Perfect success crowned this daring essay. The leading columns were nearly across the river before the French fire opened. Ground difficult and broken in itself, had been carefully strengthened with numerous field-works ; but all gave way before the desperate valour of the assailants. The light division, with the Spaniards under Longa, carried the intrenched position of Puertade-Vera. Redoubt and abattis were stoutly defended ; but from all, in quick succession, the enemy were driven at the point of the bayonet. Night fell—the attack had every where succeeded—and the victors bivouacked on the field they won, and, for the first time, the allied forces slept upon French ground.

Here the British commander established him-

self, and awaited the fall of Pamplona, which Soult's repeated defeats rendered inevitable. The garrison still obstinately held out; and when their provisions were nearly exhausted, it was rumoured that they intended, rather than surrender, to blow up the works, and take their chance of escaping. But an assurance from the Spanish commander, Don Carlos, that should the place be destroyed, he would hang the governor and officers, and decimate the men, prevented the attempt; and on the 30th of October the garrison yielded themselves prisoners of war, and the place surrendered.

Winter was now set in, and a season of unusual severity had commenced. The allies were sadly exposed to the weather, and increased difficulty was felt every day in procuring the necessary supplies. Forage became so scarce, that part of the cavalry had nothing for their horses but grass; while the cattle for the soldiers' rations, driven sometimes from the interior of

Spain, perished in immense numbers by the way, or reached the camp so wretchedly reduced in condition, as to be little better than carrion. Resources from the sea could not be trusted to—the coast was scarcely approachable in blowing weather; and even in the sheltered harbour of Passages, the transports could hardly ride to their moorings, in consequence of the heavy swell that tumbled in from the Atlantic. The cold became intense—sentries were frozen at their posts—and a picket at Roncesvalles regularly snowed up, and saved with great difficulty. All this plainly showed that the present position of the allies was not tenable, and that a forward movement into France was unavoidable.

But great difficulties in advancing presented themselves; and, all things considered, success was a matter of uncertainty. Soult's army had been powerfully reinforced by the last conscription; and for three months the French marshal had been indefatigable in fortifying the whole

line of his position, and strengthening his defences, wherever the ground would admit an enemy to approach. The field-works extended from the sea to the river, as the right rested on St. Jean-de-Luz, and the left on the Nivelle. The centre was at La Petite Rhune and the heights of Sarré. The whole position passed in a half-circle through Irogne, Ascain, Sarré, Ainhone, and Espelette. Though the centre was commanded by a higher ridge, a narrow valley interposed between them. The entire front was covered with works, and the sierras defended by a chain of redoubts. The centre was particularly strong, as a regular work, ditched and palisaded, protected it.

To turn the position, by advancing Hill's corps through St. Jean Pied-de-Port, was first determined on; but on consideration, this plan of operations was abandoned, and strong as the centre was, Wellington resolved that on it his attack should be directed, while the heights of Ainhone,

which formed its support, should, if possible, be carried simultaneously.

A commander less nerved than Wellington, would have lacked resolution for this bold and masterly operation. Every thing was against him—every chance favoured the enemy. The weather was dreadful—the rain fell in torrents—and while no army could move, the enemy had the advantage of the delay, to complete the defences of a position, which was already deemed to be almost as perfect as art and nature could render it. Nor did their powerful works produce in the French any false security. Aware of the man and the force which threatened them, they were always ready for an attack. Their outpost duty was rigidly attended to. Before day their corps were under arms, and the whole line of defences was fully garrisoned until night permitted the troops to be withdrawn.

At last the weather moderated. On the 7th, Ainhone was reconnoitred by Wellington in per-

son and the plan of the attack arranged. No operation could be more plain or straightforward. The centre was to be carried by columns of divisions, and the right centre turned. To all the corps their respective points of attack were assigned; and to the light division and Longa's Spaniards, the storming of La Petite Rhune was confided. The latter were to be supported by Alten's cavalry, three brigades of British artillery, and three mountain guns.

The 8th had been named for the attack, but the roads were so dreadfully cut up, that neither the artillery nor Hill's brigades could get into position, and it was postponed for two days longer. The 10th dawned, a clear and moonlit morning. Long before day, Lord Wellington and several of the generals of division and brigade, with their respective staffs, had assembled in a small wood, five hundred yards from the redoubt above the village of Sarré, which they only waited for sufficient light to commence attacking.

Nothing could exceed the courage and rapidity with which the troops rushed on and overcame every artificial and natural obstacle. The 3d and 7th divisions advanced in front of the village. Downie's Spanish brigade attacked by the right, while the left was turned by Cole's, and the whole of the first line of defences remained in possession of the allies.

On this glorious occasion the light division was pre-eminently distinguished. By moonlight it moved from the greater La Rhune, and formed in a ravine which separates the bolder from the lesser height. This latter was occupied in force by the enemy, and covered on every assailable point with intrenchments. As morning broke, the British light troops rushed from the hollow which had concealed them. To withstand their assault was impossible — work after work was stormed — on they went with irresistible bravery, and on the summit of the hill united themselves with Cole's division, and pushed forward against the intrenched heights behind, which was the strong-

est part of the position. Here a momentary check arrested their progress—the supporting force (Spanish) were too slow—the ground too rugged for the horse artillery to get over it with speed. The rifles were attacked in turn, and for a moment driven back by a mass of the enemy. But the reserve came up—again the light troops rushed forward—the French gave way—and the whole of the lower ridge was left in possession of the assailants.

For four hours the combat had raged, and in every point the British were victorious. A more formidable position remained behind, and Wellington combined his efforts for a vigorous attack.

This mountain position extended from Mondarin to Ascain. A long valley, through which the Nivelle flows, traverses it; and as the ground is unequal, the higher points were crowned with redoubts, and the spaces of leveller surface occupied by the French in line or column, as the nature of the ground best admitted. Men in-

clined to fight never had a field that offered so many advantages; and there were none, save the British leader and the splendid army he commanded, who would venture to assault equal numbers, posted as the enemy were.

The dispositions were soon complete—the word was given—and in six columns, with a chain of skirmishers in front, the allies advanced to the attack.

To carry a strong work, or assail a body of infantry in close column, placed on the crest of an acclivity that requires the attacking force to halt frequently for breathing-time, requires a desperate and enduring valour which few armies can boast. Such bravery on that occasion characterized the allied divisions. Masses posted on a steep height were forced from it by the bayonet, though hand and foot were necessary to enable the assaulting party to reach them. Redoubts were carried in a run, or so rapidly turned by the light troops, that the defenders had scarcely time to escape by the rear. Nothing

could resist the dash and intrepidity of the British ; and over the whole extent of that formidable position, on no point did the attack fail.

In these operations the allies had 3000 killed and wounded ; while the French were driven from a matchless position, with the loss of 50 pieces of cannon, 1500 prisoners, and some 3500 *hors de combat* !

Nearly at the close of the struggle, while the light division were carrying a strong redoubt with a rush ; and when, with their accustomed audacity, they had pushed on against the intrenched enemy as fearlessly as if they had been formed on a plain ; a stouter opposition checked them, and, for the first time, the assailants were stopped by a heavy fire from behind the abattis of the redoubt.

To pause for breath—reattack the intrenchment—one party advancing boldly in front, while the two others in a run dashed forward right and left to turn the work—was but the business of a

moment. In front they leaped over the abattis, on the flanks they jumped into the ditch, and the defenders had scarcely time to escape by the rear.

When forced back by the heavy fire from the intrenchment, O'Connor was wounded in the head, and his companions urged him to retire, and obtain surgical assistance ; but he refused to quit the field, and binding a handkerchief over his bleeding temples, led on the second attack. Ever foremost, he cleared the ditch, and sword in hand sprang through the embrasure, as the last Frenchman was abandoning the redoubt. The *tirailleur* stopped—levelled his musket—fired—the ball passed through O'Connor's body, and stretched him on the ground.

It was a glorious moment when he fell. The cheer of victory rang in his ear ; and while a dim mist gradually obscured his sight, the last objects that met the eye were French masses retiring in confusion, and red battalions advancing in double quick. He could look no

longer—his head sank back—but a wild and reiterated huzza rose over the whole surface of the battle-ground, and told that Wellington was again a conqueror!



SICK QUARTERS—DEPRESSION—AN UNEX-
PECTED LETTER.

You look not well, Signor Antonio.

MERCHANT OF VENICE.

No more—no more. Oh! never more on me
The freshness of the heart can fall like dew.

DON JUAN.

She
Grieved, but perhaps her feelings may be better
Shown in the following copy of her letter.

Ibid.



CHAPTER VI.

SICK QUARTERS—DEPRESSION—AN UNEXPECTED LETTER.

A MONTH wore heavily through, and O'Connor continued an invalid, for his wounds healed slowly. To one of his energetic disposition, a state of inactivity was most disagreeable; and when every courier that arrived brought fresh details of Wellington's triumphant advance, the disabled soldier began to loathe the confinement of sick quarters, and execrate the evil fortune which prevented his sharing in those proud actions that for a time closed the glorious roll of British victory—Orthez and Toulouse.

Local circumstances increased these repinings, which indisposition had engendered. The monotony of a place filled with sick men, and that too a wretched hamlet in the Pyrenees—dull, comfortless, and deserted—was heart-sinking to a spirit that, till now, had never been absent when daring deeds were doing. Every face he looked on was marked with some sad traces of disease—every one he encountered in his sombre walk seemed afflicted with premature decrepitude. If he remained within, O'Connor was obliged to witness the sufferings of his brave companions—many of whose recoveries had been pronounced hopeless, and who, conscious of the brief space of life allowed them, were slowly but surely sinking to an untimely grave. If he rambled out, the melancholy spectacle of death was frequently presented, as the corpse of some departed soldier was being conveyed to the little cemetery hard by, which now, alas! was thickly tenanted by those doomed

“To die—to see no more,
A much-loved country, and a native shore.”

No wonder then that the soldier's firmness began to fail, and gloomy forebodings tormented him. While every day teemed with brave adventure, he who had been foremost in the gallant throng remained cooped in a mountain hamlet, with no occupation left but to contemplate the varied forms which human suffering can assume !

In the fever of war—in the phrensied excitement of a campaign, where battle followed close on battle—the failure of his suit to Mary Howard had been half forgotten. He thought of her in secret ; but a succession of daring operations and sparkling scenes of victory, dispelled uneasy musings, and softened the painful memory of his disappointment. But now in the silence of a sick room, or the solitude of a lonely ramble, the image of the lost-one returned with poignant vividness. Vainly he taxed his firmness—vainly he summoned resolution, and strove to “pluck from the memory” a recollection that, in his present irritable mood, stung him almost to madness. Alas ! the arrow was at his heart ; and

sleeping or waking, Mary Howard engrossed his thoughts.

It was strange too, that, though so long from England, no intimation of Mary's marriage had reached him. Letters, no doubt, miscarried frequently ; but eight months had elapsed since the rifle detachment had marched from Ashfield ; and whether his lost love had become the wife of another or still remained unwedded, was wrapped in doubt.

Still, even this uncertainty afforded at times a mournful pleasure. Though lost to him, it would have been some consolation to know that she was not the wife of his detested rival. This feeling O'Connor endeavoured to persuade himself was, on his part, totally disinterested. Were Phillips one with whom her happiness would be safe, he fancied that he could have submitted without a pang, to see her consigned to the arms of another. But the soldier deceived himself. A suspicion—almost a certainty—was on his mind, that but for his rival's unfortunate intervention, Miss

Howard's heart might have been his; and with a nameless feeling from which his pride revolted, he clung to a lover's hope, and augured, from an announcement of her marriage having never reached him, that Phillips had forfeited her regard, and even yet that he and Mary should be happy.

The dulness of the Pyrenean hamlet was rendered more intolerable from a scarcity of books, or of any thing besides, that could divert the tedium of a wet day. A volume of Gil Blas—two or three monkish directories—and a Racing Calendar, found in the saddle-bags of a dead dragoon, formed the whole library of the cantonment. Sometimes a mutilated newspaper reached the *détenue*, and most frequently it came thither, wrapping some package that had arrived from England. A trunk that had for months been following an officer, now among the wounded, found him in this miserable retirement. It contained a general refit, despatched to the sick man

from his family; and O'Connor, who was present when the long-delayed supply was opened, secured a few of the wrapping papers. They were English journals; and though many were six months old, still they told what then had been passing in his fatherland. It was dark, and the soldier retired to his small apartment to peruse his newspapers, as well as a wretched substitute for a lamp would allow him.

For a time the contents of these obsolete journals were interesting. He read of *faux pas* with surprise, that in England were now forgotten. Bankers were broken, whom five minutes before he would have quoted as worth a plum; while persons who, when he saw them last, had been puzzled to procure a dinner, were now by the bounty of the blind goddess, "men of worship," and some of them members of the senate. Some military statements and speculations were, from their gross inaccuracies, and the oracular shape in which they had been delivered, exceedingly

amusing; and O'Connor took up the last fragment, wondering at the interest which a torn newspaper possessed among the Pyrenees.

He would have been happier had he passed that fragment by unheeded. It was a scrap from the Morning Post. Ere his eye rested a second on the paper, his cheek turned pale—his brow compressed itself—and his hand trembled. There he found a paragraph, among some others containing the idle gossip of the day. Though names were not mentioned, the soldier was at no loss to understand who the parties were to whom it alluded. It stated that “the dashing Captain P——, who had recently left the rifles for the — light dragoons, and whose antipathy to the Peninsula had occupied the attention of both fashionable and military coteries, had solved the mystery last week, by eloping with a village beauty. The fugitives had headed northward—and the old vicar of A——d was inconsolable.”

The paper fell from O'Connor's grasp. Mary Howard was lost to him for ever—Mary Howard

was a wife—the wife of his rival—his hated rival! It was some time before he could collect his thoughts. He took the fragment up—the date was near six months back. She married, it would appear, immediately after he had sailed from England, and had been for months a matron, while he was nursing idle phantasies, and imagined her still free. He read the paragraph again—it was strange and incomprehensible. What necessity was there for an elopement? The old man would not oppose his daughter's happiness; for Phillips had always been a favourite. Why was he inconsolable? Was it because Mary had obtained a protector? Pshaw—that conjecture was absurd. Some mystery was attached to the transaction, and O'Connor went to bed in all the wretchedness that an ardent passion, stripped of the last hope it dared to cherish, must undergo.

Bodily wounds will heal. O'Connor recovered—but the ailment at the heart was irremediable. His spirits fled—he became reserved and

dejected—and he who had been once regarded as a man who set fortune at defiance, appeared sinking beneath a fixed depression that none could account for—as none could guess the cause. The gazette, issued after the battle of Orthez, reached the isolated cantonment of the wounded, and O'Connor was in the list, a lieutenant-colonel. He seemed to read his promotion with indifference, and the wonder of those about him was redoubled.

Toulouse was fought. Soult made a last and desperate essay to arrest the British general in his victorious career; but that unnecessary expenditure of human life ended in a signal defeat, and added another laurel to the conqueror's wreath. An armistice, followed by a total cessation of hostilities, immediately succeeded. The Bourbons were restored, and Napoleon abdicated the throne of France to assume the mockery of royalty in Elba.

At this period a medical officer of superior rank visited the outlying sick and wounded, who had

necessarily remained at a distance from the scene of active operations, to ascertain what portion of the sufferers it would be advisable to invalid and send home. Fortunately he was an intimate friend of the dispirited soldier; and, stopping in the same hut, he had an excellent opportunity of observing the malady of his patient. He quickly perceived that the mind and not the body was diseased; and that to amuse his fancy and rouse O'Connor to exertion, would be the best means of speedily effecting a cure. Accordingly, he urged him to leave the village and repair to headquarters—there obtain a leave of absence, and ramble for a few months from place to place, wherever inclination led him. The advice was congenial to the feelings of the invalid—leave was readily granted—and as the continent was now open to travellers, the colonel, as we must call him for the future, set out for Switzerland, *en route* to Italy.

A very short time proved that the advice of his medical director had been judicious. O'Connor's

health became rapidly established, and, better still, his mental quietude was once more restored. He now had schooled his heart to submission, and learned to think of Mary Howard as of one dead to him altogether. Of her total alienation no doubt remained, and consequently idle hopes no longer obtruded themselves. O'Connor's cheerfulness returned; and, to the delight of many of his old companions whom he occasionally encountered on the road, the gallant colonel became "himself again."

He had been at this period four months a rambler, and only awaited the arrival of despatches he expected from England, to quit Rome, leave the continent, and turn his steps towards home. The packet came—he broke the seal impatiently—it contained several letters from his agent; but what astonished him deeply was to find in the parcel one in the well-remembered handwriting of his lost Mary. He unclosed it with a trembling hand—and his surprise increased while he read the following lines:

“ I have seen two events noticed in the papers, which have given me pain and pleasure—your name in the return of the wounded, and afterwards in the gazette, which contained the list of promotions after the battle of Toulouse. For some weeks I remained extremely wretched, until a paragraph in the Times relieved my anxiety, by noticing you among those who were stated to be convalescent. I trust the health of my dear and valued friend is now completely re-established, and that his native air, to which the newspapers mention him as about to return, will effect a speedy cure, if such be not already completed.

“ At parting, you plighted me a brotherly regard, and bade me at all times freely and fearlessly confide in you. I am about to do so, O'Connor. Alas ! little did I imagine then, how soon I should be obliged to remind you of that pledge, and by reposing confidence, obtain advice.

“ I have none other but you, O'Connor, to whom I dare apply. My father and Captain

Phillips have never met since I quitted my parent's house, and consented to what, under ordinary circumstances, would have been indelicate—a hurried and irregular marriage. But a stern necessity required this sacrifice of feeling. I owed it to my husband, and I submitted.

“I am not well—and to *you* I should blush to confess it—*I am not happy*. Residing among strangers—estranged from my beloved father—the absences of Phillips are become longer every time he leaves me. Military duty calls him frequently away; and, as he says, the regiment is far too dissipated to permit me to accompany him to head-quarters. Yet this to me, strange as I am to worldly etiquette, appears most singular; for the colonel's wife and several ladies beside, are constantly resident with their husbands.

“When we meet, O'Connor, I will open my whole heart to you. I am miserable—depressed—overwhelmed with horrible forebodings—doubts

which I dare scarcely think of, and which my hand could never trace on paper. Possibly my situation dispirits me, and I harass myself with vain fears. God grant that it may be so!—and I shall be too happy!

“Ere you arrive in England I shall in all probability have become a mother. If life is spared in that approaching trial—come to me. I have no bosom in which to confide my fears and sorrows but one—and that is yours—my more than brother!”

“Farewell, dear O’Connor. I am so weak and nervous, that you will scarcely decipher what I write. Keep me in remembrance—and pity one, who loves you as sisters love.

“Thine, most faithfully,

“MARY E. PHILLIPS.”

There was a postscript, giving the necessary directions for finding her in London, and an expressed wish that their meeting might be soon.

As O’Connor read the letter over, his brows

darkened and a flush came over his pale cheek. He folded it again, and placed it in his pocket-book.

“Yes, Mary, I will be with thee. Under all this mystery attendant on his marriage, Phillips has some villany concealed. Where was the necessity for an elopement? Why not present Mary to his regiment? The scoundrel means her false; and she, poor artless dupe, at last suspects him. Let me see.” He took the letter out, and examined the date and postmarks. It was written two months since, and had followed him from place to place, until it found him at Rome. The delay was most vexatious. What would Mary think? No deliverer appearing—and even her appeal for months unnoticed. O’Connor summoned his servant, and issued orders for an immediate departure.

“Mary,” he said, “I may not be able to redress thy wrongs, but I can avenge them. If that false villain has abused thy confidence, his

blood shall wash the stain away—ay—if I dragged him from a sanctuary !”

Within three hours Colonel O'Connor had left “the eternal city,” and night and day hurried by express to England.

ARRIVAL IN LONDON—A SCOUNDREL'S
VILLANY CONFIRMED.

OPHELIA. I hope all will be well. We must be patient:
but I cannot choose but weep. My brother
shall know of it.

HAMLET.



CHAPTER VII.

ARRIVAL IN LONDON.

No accident interrupted the colonel's journey, and in a shorter time than could have been anticipated, he reached the British metropolis and drove to a west-end hotel. The evening was far advanced—he despatched a hasty dinner—and having inquired the direction of the obscure street where his still-beloved Mary resided, he determined to set out at once and find her without delay.

While waiting for a coach, he threw his eyes carelessly over a morning paper; and with considerable satisfaction, read in the list of arrivals at

a neighbouring hotel, the name of his gallant countryman O'Brien, now, and most deservedly, a major.

The address that Mary had given him in her long-delayed letter, was to a newly-built row of houses in the vicinity of the Regent's Park. Half an hour's driving brought him to the place ; and having discharged the coach at the end of the street, he walked slowly down to find the number of the house.

From the appearance of the buildings and the remoteness of the situation—none of the numerous streets and terraces which environ the Park having then been erected—O'Connor felt considerable surprise, that this lonely and insulated outskirt should have been selected by a man of fashion for the residence of his lady. He found the number—opened a wicket that led to the hall-door, through a small shrubbery separated from the road by a paling—and stood before the humble dwelling of her whose beauty might have adorned a palace. There was no light from any

window save one in the basement story, and after pausing for a minute to collect his thoughts, he knocked gently at the door. The candle disappeared from the room below—then beamed through the fanlight of the hall—and a woman's voice next moment inquired who he was, and what he wanted? On asking for Mrs. Phillips, the door was instantly unclosed; and the owner of the house, a decent and elderly person, held the light up to examine the features of the late visiter. Accidentally, the cloak in which he had wrapped himself fell back from O'Connor's face. The woman screamed—"Can it be possible?" she exclaimed. "Good God! it is her long-expected brother!" She invited the stranger to come in—closed the hall-door—and conducted him into a clean but plainly-furnished parlour.

"Alas! colonel"—she continued—"It is no wonder I was astonished. I never expected to have seen you—nor did the dear lady herself. For many a weary week she looked daily for a letter from abroad; and when any was delivered

at the door, her first inquiry was whether it bore a foreign postmark? At last, poor soul, she began to despair, and when the postman's knock was heard in the street, she would sigh heavily and murmur, "Ah! he has letters for every one but me—and even my brother has forgotten me!"

"Damnation!" exclaimed O'Connor, passionately. "What mischief that infernal delay has caused! I know, my good woman, the letter that was expected; but the lady's only reached me ten days ago, and I have travelled night and day since I received it."

"How unfortunate!" she replied. "Had you but seen how bitterly the disappointment wounded her, you would have pitied her as I did. For hours together she would gaze upon your picture."

"My picture!"

"Ay—and it was so like you too. I knew you at the first glance, though in your picture you are dressed in green."

"But where—*where* is she?"

The woman wiped away a tear.

“Alas ! it is sorry tidings for a brother. She is gone home to”—and she paused.

“Go on—go on—for God’s sake.”

“To die !”

“Die !—Oh, no—impossible ! She was in all the bloom of youth, and health was painted on her rosy cheek, when I left her but a year ago.”

“Ah ! that year I suspect has done the mischief, sir. I fear, poor lady, health and happiness during that short period were lost.”

“But when did she go ?—where to ?—with whom ? Speak—I am in torture !”

“Her father—God pity him, poor old man !—came for her about ten days ago. They set out by easy stages for his vicarage in a carriage, and the nurse and baby, with her trunks, went by the mail. A strange dark-complexioned woman, who visited her constantly when Captain Phillips was away—and latterly he was seldom here—travelled with her as a nurse-tender !”

“A dark woman !”

“Ay—dark as a gipsy ; but she was too hand-

some and well-dressed to be one. I suppose she was some foreigner."

"Was the lady long your lodger?"

"Nearly six months. She came here a fortnight before her confinement. The captain took the lodgings."

"Her confinement. Is the child living?"

"Yes—and a lovely boy as ever eyes looked upon. He was baptized by her father, at the poor lady's request, the day before they left. It was, alas! a melancholy christening. I thought I would never weep so much, but I could not help it; for the mother, while the babe was named, sobbed as if her heart was breaking."

"What was the child called?" asked the stranger, in a broken voice.

"Edward O'Connor," replied the woman. "How pale you look, colonel! Do sit down"—and she handed him a chair.

"Tell me, and as briefly as you can," said the stranger, "all you know of my poor sister since she became your inmate."

“Willingly, colonel. I need hold nothing back from you; for it is already written to you by the lady.”

“Written.”

“Ay—I have the letter locked up in my desk, and will give it to you presently.”

“Well, your tale, my good friend. All that befel my sister—keep nothing from me.”

“I will not indeed, colonel”—and taking a chair, the hostess thus continued:

“It was in the beginning of winter that Captain Phillips drove here in a hackney-coach, and looked at the lodgings. He inquired particularly if they were very private; and on my assuring him that they were, at once engaged them. Two days afterwards he came here with your sister; and here the dear lady continued until she left this, I fear, for the grave.” The good-hearted woman burst into tears, and the soldier was deeply affected. Presently she resumed her story:

“I never saw so lovely a creature as the

lady on the day she took possession of her apartments; but, alas! too soon her looks changed—her spirits fled—and I saw that she was unhappy. The captain, at first, seldom remained from home a second night, but gradually he became less domestic, and latterly, and for whole weeks together, was absent from the lodgings. I saw that his letters began to pain her. Often they were thrown aside half read; and often, when I went into the room silently, I surprised the dear sufferer perusing them in tears, or gazing sorrowfully on your picture, colonel! At last the captain seldom stopped a second day at home; and during the whole period of her confinement he never visited her but once.

“The dark lady I told you of became now your sister’s only companion; but it was plain that she was no favourite with Captain Phillips, for the servant had strict orders, when she was with her mistress, to apprize them of her husband’s approach, if his tilbury should by chance drive up. There was indeed little fear of his

surprising them together—for during the last six weeks that she remained here, he never was in this house but once.

“That once I shall never forget ; for that dreadful visit will cause the lady’s death. God forgive me if I wrong him ! She had only left her room a few days—of course she was weak and nervous, and little able to support the interview that followed. The captain came ; and as he did always when intending to remain, he sent his gig and servant away. They dined—he appeared unusually agreeable ; and she, poor thing, happier than I had for a long time observed her. An hour afterwards a wild shriek startled me ! I was sitting in the apartment underneath this one—ran up in terror—and on the stairs encountered Captain Phillips. He passed me—flung the hall door open, and ran down the street as if a robber were behind him. The shriek was again repeated—the lady’s attendant called loudly for assistance—I flew to the drawing-room, and found your sister in convulsions. Her sufferings,

oh, God ! how terrible they were ! The physician was called in, and the dark lady sent for—both remained the whole night beside her ; and from that moment she drooped like a withered flower, until she was conveyed from this by her heart-broken parent, to fill an untimely grave. I cannot, must not deceive you, colonel—your sister's case is hopeless.”

In deep attention O'Connor listened to the detail of Mary Howard's sufferings. That Phillips had in some way wrought her ruin and abandoned her was certain ; and Ellen's prophecy was painfully recalled. As the landlady's narrative proceeded, curses escaped between his clenched teeth, and more than once he leaped in a storm of passion from the chair. The owner of the house retired for a few minutes, and brought in a packet sealed and addressed to “Colonel O'Connor.” The writing was Mary's—but the characters were almost illegible, and bore painful evidence to the feebleness of the hand that traced them. Had he wanted any other proof

that the packet came from his lost love, the device upon the seal would have been sufficient. It was the impression of an antique ring that he had found buried in the sands when assisting the engineers in throwing up a field-work in Egypt, and which, in happier days, he had prevailed on Mary to accept. The landlady lighted another candle, and would have retired from the room to leave the soldier to peruse his beloved one's epistle—but O'Connor hesitated to break the envelope; and he who had led a storming party to the breach, trembled to uncloset a lady's letter.

He bade the good woman a hasty farewell—threw himself into the coach—returned to the hotel—retired to his room—locked the door—and there read the ruin of the most spotless victim who ever fell a sacrifice to the machinations of a heartless profligate!



MEMOIR OF A RUINED BEAUTY.

A tale so sad ! a maid of noble birth
By solemn vows seduced—abandoned—left
To shame and anguish !

* * * * * *

He was a villain !

Prayers, sighs, tears, oaths—nothing was spared to win her.
She listened and believed.

* * * * * *

ADELGITHA. I'll meet him—

Sink at his feet—bathe them with tears—implore him
To spare a ruined wretch ; and if he spurns
Me and my griefs—

CLAUDIA. What wilt thou then ?

ADELGITHA. Die!—die, Claudia, die !

M. G. LEWIS.



CHAPTER VIII.



MEMOIR OF A RUINED BEAUTY.

MY hand trembles—at times my purpose fails—and I know not how to begin the sad and disgraceful disclosure. I have waited week after week for an answer to my letter. None came—and you are dead, or I deemed worthless. O'Connor, you shall never know what I felt after you had left me. That secret goes with me to the grave, and, with my imprudence, both will be there shortly forgotten.

I have a strong conviction that we shall never meet in this world, though Ellen assures me that we shall; and I cannot go to another and a better

Being, without assuring you, my valued friend, that in all save worldly experience I have nothing with which to reproach myself—and that I have, alas ! been sinned against, and not sinning.

* * * * *

I am weaker to-day. Two things alone require an explanation—my marriage, and my abandonment. While strength lasts I must make an effort, and give you a brief detail of both.

After your embarkation, Phillips visited at my father's, an acknowledged and accepted suitor. None could be more ardent—none more respectful. A distant day was named for our union ; and, at his own request, the ceremony was to be performed with as little parade as could be.

As the time drew near, Phillips redoubled his attentions ; and while his professions of regard were unabated, I thought I could occasionally discover a suppressed uneasiness that he appeared anxious to conceal. At last I ventured

to hint my suspicions. He seemed mortified; but by degrees admitted that my fears were true, and promised to repose full confidence in me on the morrow.

We strolled out next day—turned into a retired forest-walk—and there Phillips freely unbosomed himself. He had an old and singularly-tempered uncle. He was dying—the disease hopeless—a few months must bring him to the grave—and Phillips was heir to his large estates. It was the old man's fancy that his successor should form a titled alliance. Phillips had evaded matrimony hitherto, and he endeavoured to amuse the dying invalid with hopes which probably he should never live long enough to see overturned. His actions, he added, were vigilantly observed—he had grasping kinsmen jealous of the regard the old man evinced, and they would gladly seize any opportunity to ruin him with his wealthy relative. Our marriage, he feared, would afford the desired means. He cared not for himself. Of

that he had already given the strongest proof, by quitting his regiment rather than leave the woman he adored, and thus exposing himself to the most offensive imputations that could be attached to a soldier's name. This he had endured without a murmur; and he was prepared now to sacrifice his brilliant prospects, and show how ardent and disinterested his love was. I listened to him with pain. I had no fortune—and Phillips's passion for me must cost him a rich inheritance. I urged him to postpone our marriage, and wait until circumstances would admit our union taking place, without the ruinous consequences which must attend it now. But he was resolved that no delay should intervene. Fame he had already sacrificed—and let fortune follow. I hinted that our marriage might possibly be kept from the knowledge of his uncle; but Phillips, with a melancholy smile, replied, that there was an *espionage* over all he did, which would render the concealment of a public ceremony utterly impossible. Suddenly,

and as if a ray of hope flashed across his mind, his eyes brightened, and he exclaimed—"Yes, Mary, there is a chance—nay, a certainty of averting the ruin which the old man's anger would entail upon us. Mary, I must prove your love. Dare you trust yourself with him who so devotedly adores you; and, waving for a month or two a public ceremonial, wed me privately?"

I started! "Oh—no, no, Phillips. I will share your poverty, if poverty is to be the price of loving; but if I consented to such a step, even you would afterwards despise me."—"Oh, Mary!" he replied, "how little do you know my heart. Were it possible that the feelings with which I regard you could be increased, that confidence would make me love you more devotedly." Why, O'Connor, weary you with the pleadings of specious artifice. I yielded a reluctant consent, and on the third night set off for Scotland with the deceiver.

We travelled rapidly for two days, and reached the frontier safely. There was no one to inter-

rupt our journey; for my poor father was so utterly confounded when my flight was communicated to him on the next morning after I had eloped, that for many days his faculties appeared suspended, and at times his intellects seemed wandering. Late on the second evening we crossed the border, as Phillips told me; and in the private chamber of an obscure public-house, a sort of ceremony was performed by a man whose features were concealed in the twilight—a ring placed upon my finger—a scrawl, purporting to be a marriage certificate, presented to me—and I was assured that I was duly married according to the forms required by the Scottish church. That such was the case I firmly believed. I had heard that these ceremonies were strange and hurried—no suspicion of practised deceit lurked within my breast—not a doubt disturbed me, but the consciousness that a father's feelings had been sacrificed to a husband's interest; but I had the consolation of thinking that a few months would convince my

parent that I had yielded to necessity alone, and that my filial affection was unchanged and unchangeable.

We arrived in London, and the same consideration that rendered a private marriage indispensable, required us to live in the strictest retirement. To every wish that Phillips expressed, I submitted without a murmur. We resided in obscure lodgings, and excepting when we walked into the fields in the evening, or visited the theatres closely muffled up, I never left the house. This change from the life of exercise which I had previously led, began to affect my health; but I kept it from my husband, and waited patiently until the necessity for all concealment should terminate.

That time came. Phillips had been away for a week, and every post brought fresh excuses for his absence. No letter came that day, and of course I expected him at night; and while I counted the hours until he should arrive, I strove to while them away by reading. An evening

paper was brought in. I took it up—turned to the deaths and marriages—and in the obituary the first name recorded was that of his dreaded relative ! I flung the paper down. Here, then, my trial ended—concealment was no longer necessary—mystery was over. I should be an acknowledged wife—restored to the arms of my father—and—proud and happy thought—a few months privacy and suffering would be rewarded by a life of love ; and he, whom a sacrifice of feeling had saved from disinheritance, would repay it by an enduring attachment. Oh, God ! how rudely was this dream dispelled !—how cruelly those hopes blasted !

* * * * *

I am fainter—feebler—daily. I must hasten with my sorrowful disclosure, or life will ebb away before the tale of my wrongs is told. Phillips was thunderstruck at the discovery ; and, in his endeavours to elude my questioning, for the first time excited suspicions, which every day confirmed. Conscious how grossly he had

wronged the being who had loved “not wisely, but too well,” he became reserved, and sometimes peevish and unkind. The slightest allusion to our marriage, any expression of surprise at the continued concealment in which we lived, irritated and annoyed him; and, before my child was born, he appeared happy when any excuse offered him a plea for being absent.

I was confined—my baby saw the light—no father prayed beside his daughter’s couch—no husband cheered her sinking spirits during the hour of suffering. Alas! alas! the truth was too apparent—I was no longer an object of the love of him who ruined me!

* * * * *

Feeble—and feebler still—my trembling fingers now hold a pen with difficulty. I am hastening to the grave; and when you return to England, O’Connor, the narrow house will be my abiding-place.

I should have sunk under my afflictions, or lost my reason, had not an humble, but faithful

friend, watched over me as a mother tends a dying infant—that person was Ellen the gipsy. She seldom left me—when I desponded she cheered me up—and when I abandoned hope, and became nearly crazed, she placed my ill-starred baby in my arms, and asked me, would I repay his innocent smiles by robbing him of his mother. She seemed to possess a spell to rouse me in my lowest mood, and almost reconcile me to life.

* * * * *

Three weeks had passed—Phillips had been all that time with his regiment, if one or two of his short cold billets spoke truth—and, though Canterbury was so near, he could not obtain leave to visit his wife and child. Ellen was unusually grave. Some new misfortune was impending. What could it be? My father—was he ill—sick—dead? I asked the gipsy, but she assured me he was well, and hinted, in her own dark and mystic way, that I might see him before long. That moment the postman

knocked—the maid brought up a letter—it was from my husband, and couched in much warmer terms than those in which his notes had latterly been worded—it intimated his intention of being with me that day for dinner.

Ellen read the billet over. She looked at me—perused the letter again—and muttered, “Too kind to be sincere—lady, be firm—prepare for a surprise—and it may not be one from which pleasure comes.”

“I cannot be more wretched, Ellen, than I am. Let it come—I am too miserable to heed it.”

The gipsy shook her head; and, as she hated Phillips, left the house immediately.

He came—I heard his step upon the stairs—my heart beat violently—but, oh! how different the feeling was from the throb of delight with which, a few months since, I listened for a lover’s return! He kissed me tenderly—asked for *our* boy—took the child in his arms—

gazed on it as a father looks upon his first-born, and—

“ Sad proof in peril, and in pain,
How late will lover’s hope remain”—

I thought some blessed influence had touched his heart, and that I should regain a husband—my boy, a father.

When dinner was removed, Phillips filled a glass of wine, urged me to drink it, and exhibited a show of fondness that half confirmed the happy change which, as I fancied, my good angel had brought about. He placed himself beside me on the sofa ; and as his arm encircled me and his hand pressed mine, he said, in the soft and winning tone he could so artfully assume,

“ Mary I have much to confess, and you have much to pardon. I have been latterly inattentive, unkind, apparently indifferent ; but when all is told, you will pity and forgive me.”

I burst into tears.

“ Alas ! Phillips, I have suffered much ; but could I only reclaim that truant heart of thine, no allusion to the past should ever escape my lips, and I would think of nothing but the joyous change that had again replaced me in the affections of an alienated husband.”

“ Ah ! Mary,” he said, “ I have been apparently unkind ; but I, too, have been unhappy. I have destroyed myself by play, and nothing but one act can save me from perdition. You are the arbitress of my fate !”

“ *I!* say, what can I do ? We must live humbly, Phillips. Ah ! I partly understand you. These lodgings are too expensive”—

“ Damnation !” he exclaimed. “ No, no, Mary. I’ll change you to a residence more fitted for beauty like yours to dwell in—a carriage—an establishment—every thing which that gentle heart can long for—all shall be yours !”

I stared at him, and shuddered. I feared that misfortune had unsettled his brain. A

ruined man talking as he did, savoured of insanity.

“Phillips, I am contented where I am. All I ask for is your undivided love.”

“And have there not been times when you would have wished yourself once more free?”

“There have,” I replied. “When I thought I had outlived your affection, then I bitterly lamented the accident that made us first acquainted.”

“Well, well—I have been imprudent—I stand upon the brink of ruin—and yet one step places me almost beyond the reach of fortune, and secures opulence for you, Mary, and a noble provision for your infant.”

I was lost in amazement, and waited in breathless anxiety for what would follow.

“Our marriage was somewhat hurried and informal, Mary.”

“Oh, yes, Phillips. Often do I repent that I wanted resolution to be unkind, and determination to refuse your suit, until we might

have married without this lowering concealment."

"The world believe," he continued carelessly, "that we are not wedded."

"Oh God! how dreadful must that suspicion be to you. How insulting, Phillips, to know, that the reputation of a stainless wife, the legitimacy of a guiltless infant, are questioned from the necessity of a clandestine ceremony!"

"Mary, you have made one sacrifice—*another* would render me the happiest of men; for it will enable me to place you, where beauty and gentleness like yours deserve to be—in luxury and splendour."

"I cannot comprehend your meaning, Phillips."

"Hear me calmly, Mary"—and he appeared to be making a strong effort to gain courage for an embarrassing explanation. "I am, as I have told you, ruined. I have play-debts in themselves of no great amount—but to me, without any resource to meet them, destructive as if they

reached above the income of a monarch. One of those dull creatures, chosen by the blind caprice of fortune to bear the weight of wealth, has fancied me as the person on whom she would lavish her riches; and no barrier stands between me and a noble independence, but our hasty and irregular engagement."

I nearly fainted; but I held up, and strove to sustain my sinking strength.

"Hasty and irregular engagement!" I replied. "Mean you our marriage by that term, Phillips?"

"Ay—if you please to call it so."

"Call it so!" I exclaimed. "What name besides should a solemn ceremony—"

"Pish!" he replied. "There was no solemnity in it."

"No, there was none indeed—but in Scotland—"

"Mary, we were never eighty miles from where you are at present."

Great God!—a sudden conviction of treachery

rushed upon my mind, and I passionately exclaimed—"Who?—who performed the —"

Phillips mustered resolution to unmask the whole.

"A broken billiard-marker was the priest, my own servant the witness, and you and I, Mary, are free as air!"

I remember nothing more—a wild shriek burst from me—darkness shut every object out—I tottered, and fell upon the carpet!

* * * * *

I recovered my senses. Ellen plucked me from the jaws of death, and for my deserted baby's sake I strove to live. I wrote to Phillips. The letter was, I suppose, the effusion of a mind half crazed—and a cool and guarded reply was returned. It spoke of "our engagement" as "a foolish affair," and professed a readiness on the writer's part to settle a comfortable annuity on me, and a fitting provision on the infant. This insult almost brought me to the grave. Again I rallied—again I wrote to my destroyer.

The appeal was to his feelings, and humbly worded, as the supplication of a wretch who begs a moment's respite from the headsman. The answer—for one was sent—told me that our correspondence must cease—that in another month he should be married—assured me that my father was ready to receive me with open arms, and confessed that he had intercepted the numerous letters which the heart-broken old man had written.

* * * * *

I wrote to my parent. Ellen guided my hand, for I was too nervous, without assistance, to scrawl the few lines I did. The kindest—the tenderest reply that ever a fond father addressed to an erring child, came to me by the following post. He would have hastened to me instantly, but wished to apprise me a day or two before his arrival, lest our meeting might be too sudden, and a surprise should injure me.

* * * * *

He is come. I have wept upon his bosom,

and I shall set out with my heart-broken father, to die beneath the roof where years of peace and innocence glided calmly by. You will scarcely read my writing—nerves and strength momentarily grow weaker. Now, O'Connor, I have to prefer my last—my dying request. My boy in a few days will be motherless; and, worse than honest-born orphanage, the stain of illegitimacy will be affixed upon his guiltless name. Will you, for my sake, forget the father, and protect the child?

* * * * * *

He is named after you, and to-morrow I set out for the vicarage. Phillips is on a visit with his bride's brother, not forty miles from Ashfield! Is not this unfeeling? They are to be married in a fortnight. Another week or two would have seen me in the grave, and surely he might have waited for that! No matter—a little longer, and my earthly trials shall have ended.

* * * * * *

“O'Connor, farewell. The last blessing of

one who in death owns her love, is yours. Remember, I consign my boy to you. We shall never meet here. The flame of life is smouldering fast away. God for ever bless and guard you, is the dying prayer of

MARY E. HOWARD.

London, — 8th, 1814.

THE HOUSE OF DEATH.

GUISCARD. Why weep, and hide thy face?
Turn to thy Guiscard—turn to him who loves thee.

ADELGITHA. Thou lov'st me! Oh! repeat those
blessed sounds!

GUISCARD. Canst thou doubt my love?

ADELGITHA. *Still* lov'st me—*Still*!
Pronounce that word—"Still! still!"

M. G. LEWIS.

CHAPTER IX.

THE HOUSE OF DEATH.

A FINE spring evening had set in, when a chaise and four horses were seen descending the long hill, over which the London road to Ashfield passes. The pace at which the drivers went was unusually fast, and a few minutes would bring them to the end of their journey, if the village was the intended resting-place. Suddenly the postboys pulled up—a traveller left the carriage—and while his companion kept his seat, and proceeded towards the inn, the stranger walked forward, and turning off the

common into a narrow green lane, approached “the village preacher’s modest mansion.”

An unbroken stillness reigned around. No busy hum—no joyous laugh told that rural labour was proceeding. The house itself had a sombre and deserted look; and the cawing of the rooks, perched upon the top branches of the sycamores that surrounded the dwelling, seemed to the traveller melancholy beyond expression.

The stranger was wrapped closely in a blue cloak; but his air and step were too soldierly to be mistaken. He stopped for a moment at the entrance of the parsonage—then raised the muffled knocker—and the door was promptly opened by a female attendant.

In a low and broken voice he made an inquiry, which was answered by a mute inclination of the head. “Is she still living?” the stranger murmured in a whisper. “Yes: but her sufferings, poor lady, are nearly ended.” Farther conversation was interrupted by the appearance of a stout dark woman, who touched

the soldier's cloak, and, gliding into an adjoining room, beckoned him to follow.

The meeting between O'Connor and the gipsy—for these were the persons—was affectionate as it was melancholy. Ellen leaned upon his shoulder; and, while her dark eyes were moist with sorrow, she informed him that Mary Howard was in the last extremity, and that the heart which he had sought so ardently, in a few hours would cease to throb. Not a shadow of hope existed—the sufferer's strength was sinking momentarily; but, though the frame was feeble, her mental energies were unimpaired, and, in perfect consciousness of approaching dissolution, she awaited “the spirit's parting from its house of clay,” with all the holy calmness of an expiring martyr.

From the commencement to the close of her illness, the gipsy mentioned that she had spoken incessantly of her rejected lover. He appeared the engrossing object of her whole thoughts; and when she wished that the span of existence

might be lengthened but a little longer, it was only in the hope that she should see him, whom she valued so dearly, before the final struggle terminated. In her present exhaustion, whether a parting interview might be hazarded was doubtful — instant dissolution might ensue ; and Ellen left the unhappy soldier to himself, while she went to Mary's chamber to ascertain if she might communicate by degrees the news of his unexpected return.

When left alone, the soldier cast a melancholy look round the apartment. It was the same in which his last interview with Mary had taken place. All in that chamber brought her to his recollection as she was then, bright and lovely — the rosy hue of health upon her cheek — the glow of reciprocated passion flushing in her bosom. What was she now ? Oh, God ! that beauty had vanished like a dream, and a false love had withered that heart which then had cherished it with such tenderness !

O'Connor's meditations were speedily inter-

rupted—a female servant whispered him to follow her. Silently he ascended the stairs—the maid opened a chamber-door—and pointing to a chair within, signed to the stranger that he should enter and sit down.

It was the apartment in which Mary Howard was dying. The light was partially obscured, and the disposition of the bed-curtains such, as to enable O'Connor, unseen himself, to look upon the faded countenance of the lost one. Her father had just risen from his knees, where he had been engaged in silent prayer; and the gipsy stood beside the bed, with her dark and brilliant eyes bent upon the sufferer, as if to watch the expected change that was to har-binger immediate dissolution. One thing struck O'Connor as remarkable; though the voice was weak and tremulous, and the delivery of what she uttered unusually slow, every syllable that passed the lips of the dying beauty was distinct and audible.

“Has the post come in yet, Ellen?” was the first question of the invalid.

“Yes, my dear.”

“And no letter from abroad?”

“None, love:” replied the gipsy.

“Ah! Ellen, for once your prophecies have failed:” said the sufferer, with a feeble smile.

“No, my sweet love, they have not. O’Connor is returning, and you will live to see him.”

“Ha! Is—is his ship upon the sea, Ellen?”

“His voyage is ended—your letter only reached him a few days ago—and your adopted brother is already in England.”

“Then, Heaven, I thank thee!” and she raised her still bright eyes upwards. “Ellen, thou wouldst not deceive me. When, when shall I see him?”

“Alas! love, you are too weak—too nervous. See, how the mention of his very name has brought that hectic to your cheek. You would agitate yourself.”

“ No, no, Ellen, I have more strength than you all suppose. I would only consign my boy to his protection, and bid him a last farewell. Where is he ? Is he in the village ? ”

“ He is near you, Mary ; and only waits until you are calm enough to see him.”

While this short and painful scene was passing, O'Connor's emotion became far too powerful to be suppressed. Tears stole down his sunburnt cheeks, and a stifled sob escaped involuntarily. The quick ear of the dying girl heard it.

“ Hush ! ” she said ; “ that convulsive sigh came not from a woman's bosom. Art thou near me, O'Connor ? ”

The gipsy gave a signal that he might approach—the soldier moved softly forward, and sank down beside the bed, to prevent sudden surprise. He took the attenuated hand that lay upon the coverlet gently in his own, while the gipsy bent over the village beauty, and

whispered that her long-expected brother was kneeling beside her.

“Ha ! Ellen. Is the hand that holds mine his?”

“Yes, dearest. Did I not tell you he was near thee?”

“How happy then shall my last moments be !” she said with animation. “Edward, come round, that I may see you better. Fear nothing, Ellen, I will be calm—indeed I will. I am far stronger than you all believe me.”

O'Connor obeyed her wish, and placed himself on a chair beside her. The old man wrung his hand in silence. At the invalid's request, the attendants left the room ; her father followed them ; and none remained beside the bed of death, but the soldier and the gipsy.

“Are we alone, Ellen?” the sufferer muttered.

“Yes, love ; there are none here but the colonel and myself.”

“Open the curtains, Ellen, and let me see that face which I prayed so fervently to look on ere I died.”

She was obeyed, while O'Connor leaned over her pillow, and gently laid his lips to hers. She fixed her eyes upon him with a smile, and with her fingers parted the grizzled hair that covered his forehead, and partially concealed the sword-cut that traversed it.

“It is a fearful scar!” she murmured. “Your cheek is darker too; ay, and your hair turned gray. One year, Edward, has changed us both. And did you hasten home, as Ellen says, when you received my long-delayed letter?”

“I did, Mary. I hurried hither to avenge your wrongs, and—”

“What?” she inquired eagerly.

“Take you to this bosom for ever, and prove how imperishable my love was.”

“Oh, no, no, O'Connor. Had I lived, should

I have been an object for a brave man's heart to centre in? I—humbled—debased—deserted. But you pitied—”

“And loved you, Mary, more tenderly than ever!”

“Then I did not forfeit your good opinion. Thank God! that consolation is left. None, save that that Omniscient Being, knows how artfully I was beset—how innocently I fell.

She paused—gained fresh strength—and thus continued :

“I am dying happily. No care but one remains—my child—my child!”

“He's mine, Mary—mine from this hour. Father never attended to his offspring more faithfully than I shall watch over my adopted heir.”

“Thanks—thanks! Ellen, tell the nurse to bring Edward O'Connor to his father”—and at the name a faint smile played for an instant

across her pallid features. The infant came—and as if in mockery of the scene of death, his rosy cheek was dimpled with a smile, as he gazed around, and looked as if those he saw were happy. The dying mother signed to the nurse to place him in the soldier's arms.

“He is yours, O'Connor. Come let me for the last time kiss the adopted child, and him who has become the orphan's father.”

The soldier stooped down—the infant's lips touched those of Mary Howard.

“Farewell, my boy—farewell, my brother!” she said, in a voice so feeble that it could scarcely be understood. Suddenly her head fell back upon the pillow. The gipsy raised it gently, and whispered, “You are weak, my love!”

No answer was returned—one long deep sigh escaped.

“Help!” exclaimed the soldier. “She is dying!”

"Hush!" returned the gipsy. "'Tis over—Mary Howard is dead!"—as she replaced her head upon the pillow, and folding her arms, gazed upon the departed beauty.

"'Tis ended!" she continued. "No mortal treachery can reach thee now. Soft be thy rest, sweet one! Even thy innocence could not escape the villany of the world." Then turning to O'Connor, who continued gazing on the pale corpse: "Colonel, this is no place for you. Vengeance belongs to man—to wail for the departed is a woman's office."

The soldier started.

"Ha! I understand you, Ellen! One moment of weakness—and it is the last!"

He stooped down, and laid his lips to those that had once been so beautiful.

"'Tis the last time"—he murmured. "Cold—ay, cold already."

A sudden gleam of light flashed upon the pale corpse—the soldier noticed it.

“Mary, my lost one ! Before that sun sets a second time, another shall be cold as thou art !”

He said—rushed from the room—and with rapid strides was seen hurrying from the house of death.



THE HOUSE OF FEASTING—AN UNWELCOME
VISITER.

Ay, seize the present hour! Ere long I'll dash
Your cup of joy with bitter.

ADELGITHA.

Birthless villains tread on the neck of the brave and the
long-descended.

ROB ROY.

Sir, your fortune's ruin'd if you are not married.

SHERIDAN.



CHAPTER X.

THE HOUSE OF FEASTING.

THE scene is changed—the house of mourning is deserted, and where our story passes to there was joy and revelry, for on the third morning the heiress of Bewley Hall was to become a bride.

Nothing was talked of for many a mile around, but the splendour and display that was to distinguish this important event. A numerous company had been invited to be present at the ceremony, and a number of the guests had already arrived at the Hall.

Mr. Harman, the present owner of Bewley Hall, and father to the bride elect, was one of those lucky individuals on whom fortune showers her favours. He had gone to India a needy man—and the child of humble parents, he had nothing to trust to but his own unassisted exertions. With neither money or patronage to introduce him to the road to riches, as it frequently falls out, he contrived to find the path himself, and in his prosperous career, outstripped those who had started on the same course with the adventitious aid of opulence and family connexion. In five-and-thirty years he amassed an enormous fortune, returned to England, purchased the mansion of a ruined noble, accumulated property of every kind; and he who in boyhood had driven his father's bread-cart round the country, mixed with the proudest in the land; and, anxious to veil in oblivion his lowly origin, he intrigued with ministers for a title, and looked forward to see his once humble name enrolled among the peers of Britain.

There are alloys generally found even in the most brilliant instances of worldly prosperity. Mr. Harman was vain and ambitious. He had achieved a fortune, and he would fain have been the founder of a family ; but he had no son—no male heir to continue his name. He was the father of a daughter. In early life his first worldly advancement was obtained by forming an alliance with the widow of a cotton-planter. She was the offspring of a native woman ; and unluckily, the only issue of his marriage, the heiress of Bewley Hall exhibited in features and complexion incontestable evidence of the Indian source from which she was so immediately descended.

Still Mr. Harman might have partially obtained the object he ambitioned, by forming an aristocratic alliance for his daughter. There were enough of poor and sordid titles ready to be bartered for even a portion of his wealth. But in this design he was fated to meet a disappointment. It pleased his daughter to fancy for her husband, a person who had little save fashion and

good looks to recommend him; and after idly attempting to combat the caprice of an obstinate girl, the old nabob yielded a reluctant consent. The day for the ceremony was named, and magnificent preparations made to give that *éclat* to the wedding, which an eastern *millionaire* so dearly delights in.

A splendid dinner had been just removed—the dessert was placed upon the table—the servants left the room—and the wine circulated freely. In honour of the joyous occasion of this merry meeting, the countenances of the guests were clothed in smiles; and the nabob, infected with the general hilarity, half forgot that he was becoming the father of an untitled son-in-law. The bride, glittering in jewels, looked with womanly pride at her handsome husband, who, in the rich and showy full dress of a hussar regiment, was seated beside her. All were happy, or at least all appeared to be so—although in secret the women envied the dusky heiress her conquest of the gay dragoon, while the men exe-

crated their friend's good fortune, in obtaining in the hymeneal lottery a prize like the nabob's daughter.

Just then a laced and powdered functionary entered the banquet-room with noiseless step, and whispered in the bridegroom's ear that "the captain was arrived." It would appear that the new comer was both an expected and a welcome visiter, as the dashing hussar apologized for a short absence, and hastened to the library to meet the stranger.

While passing through the lofty hall and lighted corridor, which led to the apartment where the lately arrived guest was waiting for him, Phillips glanced a look of pride and triumph on the splendour that every where was presented to the eye in this house of opulence. The mansion, and all it contained, would at no distant period be his own—fortune was about to heap her favours on him with an unsparing hand—long and ardently had he sighed for wealth—it was already within his grasp—the boldest flight

of his ambition was achieved, and an inheritance which few nobles could aspire to was won. True, there was a wife attached—a woman without personal or intellectual accomplishments—a woman he could never love—one whom he already regarded with secret repugnance. But was there not venal beauty to be bought, and credulous and unsuspecting innocence to be betrayed? He had boundless means for effecting all he wished for placed at his disposal. What was the sacred vow exacted at the holy altar to him? No solemn oath would be regarded by the profligate; and he who could heartlessly abandon a being so pure and beautiful as her whom his falsehood had killed, would feel slight compunction in becoming faithless to a wife whom, even before marriage, he detested.

While O'Brien—for he was the unexpected visiter—waited for the footman's return, he amused himself in examining the splendid apartment to which he had been introduced. The reckless extravagance of the former owner of the

Hall, was evidenced in the sumptuous furniture of the library. Books of the rarest and most expensive kinds in superb bindings, filled the cases; and paintings, at ruinous prices, hung thickly round the walls. A large Indian screen was drawn partially across the fireplace. There O'Brien stood; and while the person to whom his untimely visit was intended remained absent, the soldier could not but moralize on the mutability of human fortune which this costly chamber betrayed.

Bewley Hall had been built by a noble earl, who after a long minority, succeeded to large estates, and an immense sum of money accumulated during nonage. His youth had been consumed in travelling, and he came home delighted with every thing foreign, and strongly prejudiced against his native land. The venerable mansion which for centuries had witnessed the births and dissolution of his fathers, was condemned as uninhabitable, and he commenced an edifice for himself.

The building of the Hall, and embellishment of a park of immense extent, appeared the engrossing business of a life; and reckless of enormous outlay, the earl pursued his object with an ardour which nothing could control. Hills were elevated and levelled—lakes sunk—bridges and aqueducts, temples and hermitages erected from the most costly materials—trees, at their maturity, were transplanted—groves sprang up and disappeared, as if by magic—the whole face of nature changed; and the same plain, that ages before supplied the hospitable board of some stout old baron with venison, now floated on a silver sheet of water the dark gondola of the present lord. Day was not long enough to perfect the designs a wild imagination rapidly created. At night a fresh relay of artificers were employed; and at that silent hour, when mortal labour is supposed to terminate, the ceaseless clang of axe and trowel announced to the belated traveller, that, even while he slept himself, the earl's boundless schemes were progressing.

But England did not afford sufficient scope for his extravagance. Agents in every city on the continent were engaged in purchasing marbles and paintings, and securing the most expensive relics of antiquity. At every book-sale the rarest portion of the collection fell to the earl's lot ; and the very corners of the earth furnished their most curious productions to gratify the fancy of this eccentric individual.

Wealth, however great, may be exhausted ; and, in a few years, the immense accumulation of a long minority was expended. But his estates yielded a ready supply ; and, if possible, the earl laboured on more vigorously.

Years passed—frequent and heavy supplies had been so unsparingly procured, that at last the princely property would produce no more. The earl was a ruined man ; and the hall and its appurtenances—sad memorials of his weakness—were offered for sale ; but few could venture to purchase a place on which it was believed more than half a million had been expended. After a

considerable delay the sale of Bewley Hall was duly announced; and Mr. Harman, “the millionaire,” was stated to be the fortunate purchaser. The earl retired to end his days, in comparative poverty, on the continent; and thus the best portion of the life, and the princely revenues of one of the proudest peers in Britain, had been consumed in founding a residence for the baker’s boy.—*Sic transit.*

While O’Brien was pondering upon this singular freak of fortune, his revery was broken by the opening of the library-door. The sparkling embroidery of an hussar jacket announced the coming of the person he was waiting for, while the screen partially concealed the soldier’s face and figure, and, until within arm’s length, Phillips did not recognise his *quondam* acquaintance. He entered the apartment in high and glowing spirits, but a few moments “changed his mood and checked his pride.”

“Welcome, my dear Bouverie!” he exclaimed, as he came forward. “I feared some

accident had detained you, and that I, without thy friendly counsel and support, must have faced the parson *solus*, and promised to be virtuous evermore! Ha! Captain O'Brien!" and the colour deserted his cheeks—"This—is—an unexpected pleasure!" as with difficulty he stammered the words out, and held his hand forward. The visiter made no attempt to take it, but replied,

"I fear my late visit will occasion you as little pleasure as it has given me, Captain Phillips. My errand is not a friendly one. We are alone, I hope?"

"Perfectly so:" was the reply, while the lip became pale and tremulous.

"Then, the briefer an unpleasant communication is made," said the soldier, "the better for all. I come from Colonel O'Connor."

"From Colonel O'Connor!" and the name seemed to paralyze him. "And is Colonel O'Connor in England?"

“ He is now,” returned the Irishman coldly,
“ waiting my return at the village inn.”

“ And may I ask what brought him thither ?”

“ The same errand which recalled him post
from Italy—to avenge the wrongs of Mary
Howard !”

“ I cannot,” replied Captain Phillips, “ see
by what right a person totally unconnected with
Mr. Howard’s family, assumes the office of re-
dressing a lady’s wrongs who has a father to
protect her.”

“ To moot that point is not my business ; and
if I might recal to Captain Phillips’s recollection
the last interview that took place between him
and Colonel O’Connor before the latter went to
Spain, my friend’s determination respecting Miss
Howard was clearly stated then. But we lose
time. I am come to require a meeting at as early
an hour to-morrow morning as Captain Phillips
can make it convenient.”

“ A meeting ! What cause of quarrel has

Colonel O'Connor with me? I have done *him* no injury."

"*Done him no injury!* Captain Phillips—can you look me in the face and say so?" and O'Brien sternly fixed his eyes upon the abashed countenance of the trembling villain. "There breathed not upon earth the man who had power to wound my gallant friend save one. You, sir, were that one: and you have wrung Edward O'Connor to the soul."

"I will not affect to misunderstand you, Captain O'Brien."

"I am *Major* O'Brien," rejoined the Irishman haughtily.

"I beg your pardon—your promotion escaped my memory. I comprehend the nature of your errand perfectly; and it is your friend's fault if any indiscretion which I may have committed, shall not be amply atoned for, and the lady and her family satisfied to the utmost extent of their wishes."

He paused—O'Brien bowed—and Phillips again continued :

“ I regret most deeply the unfortunate affair that has occurred ; and I am ready to offer every reparation to Miss Howard but *one*—I cannot marry her.”

“ Indeed ! that would be impossible,” said O'Brien, calmly.

“ I am glad you see it in its true light,” rejoined Phillips—and his face brightened. “ But name any other means by which I may remedy”—

“ A ruined reputation,” returned O'Brien, with an expression of deep contempt. “ Know you not, Captain Phillips, that

“ Honour, like life, once lost, is lost for ever !”

“ Well, well,” as far as it can be done, I will do every thing in my power to satisfy Colonel O'Connor. I will provide most amply for Mary.”

“ She is already provided for,” returned O'Brien.

“Indeed? I cannot guess how.”

“You need not. I will tell you.”

Phillips's looks expressed astonishment.

“Mary Howard is beyond the reach of mortal wants. She is dead!”

“*Dead!*” repeated Phillips. “*Dead!*—it is impossible!”—and he tottered against the mantelpiece for support.

“It is too true, sir,” was the cold response. “She is released from sin and suffering. Your victim is at rest. Poor girl—few and evil were the days allotted to her!”

The soldier stooped his head, for feelings unsuited to the purpose of his coming had been excited, and he wished them to be concealed. In a few seconds he turned to the pale and agitated criminal, and with an expression of stern determination, thus continued:

“Captain Phillips, nothing remains for me to do, but simply deliver the message with which I am intrusted. Colonel O'Connor will expect an early meeting.”

“It is utterly impossible!” exclaimed Phillips

passionately. "On the second morning I am to be married; after that ceremony is ended, I shall not refuse Colonel O'Connor's message, if he chooses to repeat it."

"I must be candid, Captain Phillips. The meeting must be to-morrow, or, believe me, the ceremony you allude to will never take place. Report whispers that Mr. Harman was not very desirous for the union; and there are documents in my friend's possession, connected with the betrayal of Mary Howard, which shall be exhibited to him before noon. The motives you assigned for marriage, and the feelings you express towards the lady, will not I think be flattering either to her father or herself."

Phillips turned ghastly pale. Another circumstance, unknown to any but himself and a chosen agent, rendered his present position so precarious, that a breath would shipwreck him though so near the haven of his wishes. It is briefly told. When he became suitor to the nabob's daughter, Mr. Harman disapproved of his addresses; and

to frustrate his designs upon his daughter, determined to provide her with a husband, and proposed an alliance between the noble earl whose property he had purchased, and the heiress of Bewley Hall. Phillips accidentally discovered the purport of this secret overture; and by bribing the courier employed on the occasion, managed to substitute another and a very different reply to that which the earl had returned. Piqued at the hauteur and coldness with which a ruined peer rejected the honour of an alliance with his heiress, Harman yielded to his daughter's solicitations, and reluctantly consented to her marrying a commoner, and a man who had neither fortune nor family to recommend him.

So far Phillips had been successful; but until the indissoluble knot was tied he remained in perilous insecurity. The earl's letter had contained a flattering acceptance of the nabob's offer; and intimated his intention of visiting England at an appointed time, which was now rapidly approximating. If he should arrive before

the ceremony took place, the cheat would be discovered and the forgery exposed. Hence the delay of a few days might prove ruinous. With Phillips therefore, all that ambitious profligacy values was at stake; and much as he dreaded a meeting with O'Connor, that desperate alternative alone was left, and he determined to accept the message.

“And is the call of Colonel O'Connor so urgent, so imperative, that a delay of three days cannot be given?” he inquired.

“Captain Phillips,” replied the soldier firmly. “If my friend be not amply satisfied before breakfast to-morrow, before noon you will be exposed and degraded.”

“Enough, sir. I expect Captain Bouverie, a brother officer, every moment. He came on a different errand; but if it must be, he will no doubt act for me in this affair. Where shall I send to you?”

“We are stopping for the night at the White Lion, and there I shall expect his visit.”

O'Brien took his hat—Phillips rang the bell—and when a footman answered it, he conducted the unwelcome visiter to the door, and bade him a ceremonious “good night.”

Returning to the library fire, the wretched criminal found leisure for melancholy recollections; and, strange to say, the fate of his murdered victim caused less remorse to the seducer, than dread for the consequences its discovery might occasion.

“Damnation!” he muttered through his clenched teeth. “Had these luckless letters been intercepted, this savage Irishman would have neither heard of Mary’s desertion, nor come back to avenge her injuries. It must be admitted, after all, that she was cruelly betrayed; but death was produced by her own obstinacy. Had she been reasonable, I would have nobly recompensed her disappointment. But to-morrow—it is an infernal risk to run—and nothing but to meet that madman can avert my ruin. Oh! that I could remove him secretly. No, no—the

thing's impossible. I must return to the company, and offer incense to that charmless half-caste, while the loveliest being I ever wooed and won is—I must not even think of it. Come, rouse thyself—fortune or ruin hang on to-morrow's chances.”

The hall-bell sounded—the library-door was flung open—a stranger was announced. It was the expected guest, Captain Bouverie.

THE DUEL.

'Sdeath, I never was in worse humour in all my life!
I could cut my own throat, or any other person's, with the
greatest pleasure in the world!

THE RIVALS.

Every wight has his weird, and we maun a' dee when
our day comes.

ROB ROY.

CHAPTER XI.

THE DUEL.

WHEN O'Brien returned to the village, he found his companion writing letters in the little parlour, into which they had been inducted on their arrival by the hostess of the inn. As O'Connor listened to the detail which his gallant friend gave of his mission to the Hall, a smile of stern satisfaction flashed for a moment across his melancholy countenance, when the early opportunity a meeting on to-morrow would afford him of avenging Mary Howard's wrongs was announced. He folded his letters, sealed, and despatched them, and then sat down to supper.

To one whose *hardiesse* had been so often and so desperately proved, the hostile rencounter now certain to ensue, would be an affair of slight consideration. That Phillips would evade or decline a meeting altogether, had been the thing he dreaded most ; and the assurance which O'Brien gave, that his enemy would not disappoint him, removed that anxiety. While his friend had been absent, O'Connor examined the ground in the immediate vicinity of the hamlet, and selected a small enclosure adjoining the churchyard, whose level sward and lofty hedges rendered it a fitting place for the decision of a mortal quarrel. He described its situation to his friend ; and soon afterwards " the maid of the inn " announced that a gentleman had called, and presented a card, on which " Captain Bouverie, — Hussars," was inscribed. The visiter was shown into another room, and Major O'Brien joined him immediately.

After a brief conference preliminaries were settled. Fresh overtures for a friendly accommo-

dition having been peremptorily rejected, Bouverie named five next morning for the hour, and acceded to the paddock selected by O'Connor as the place of meeting. O'Brien anticipated a stronger effort at negotiation; but secret intelligence had reached Phillips that the earl had actually arrived at Paris, *en route* to Bewley Hall; and this determined him rather to meet the man he dreaded, than risk a certain *exposé* which might delay his marriage, and, by delaying, mar his hopes for ever.

Evening wore on, and at a late hour O'Connor and his companion parted. How those, who were to be combatants in the morning passed that night, may be readily conjectured. Sorrow and love — hatred and revenge — racked the bosom of the gallant soldier; while the destroyer of innocence, in that still hour when the torturous sting of conscience is felt most keenly, fancied that the dead beauty in the costume of the grave, was standing before him continually, and taxed him with her ruin. Driven by a desperate alter-

native to abide the challenge of a deadly enemy, he trembled at the ordeal of to-morrow; and the haggard expression of his pale and agitated countenance betrayed the secret, when morning dawned, that sleep visits not the guilty.

A day of threatening inclemency was rendered gloomier by a drizzling rain. O'Connor's couch had been probably as restless as his rival's; but when his friend entered his chamber, he was dressed with customary neatness, and perfectly ready for the field. The expression of his face was serious, almost approaching to sadness; but there was no nervous uneasiness visible—no excited flush which would indicate that he was about to engage in any unusual business; while the compression of the lip, and the sparkle of the eye, bespoke that calm and dangerous resolution, which renders an opponent doubly formidable.

Under the pretext of resuming their journey, the early rising of the guests was unnoticed by the inmates of the White Lion. The indifference

with which breakfast was ordered in half-an-hour, and post-horses directed to be in readiness to put to, removed every suspicion ; and although the place of meeting was within a bow-shot of the inn, no one in the house, when the soldiers strolled carelessly out, dreamed that a deadly rencounter was about to happen.

The church clock was striking five, as O'Connor and O'Brien passed from the high road and crossed the stile. No peasant was astir, for the wet and gloomy morning delayed the earliest within their houses. O'Brien, beneath his military cloak, concealed the pistol-case ; and, unseen and unsuspected, the soldiers reached the rendezvous, and waited the coming of their opponents.

Their stay was short—a vehicle was heard approaching—the wheels stopped suddenly—and in a few minutes three men entered the enclosure. Two of them were familiar to those already there ; and the third was a surgeon, whom Phillips had engaged for the occasion.

As his rival crossed the stile, the blood rushed

to O'Connor's forehead, and his brows united in a deadly scowl. Instantly that cloud passed away, and an expression of stern determination succeeded the hasty ebullition his foe's appearance had excited for a moment.

The arrangements were not effected without delay upon the part of Bouverie, as he objected to O'Brien's proposition of giving a case of pistols to each of the combatants, to use as each pleased after the firing signal had been pronounced. But in this the latter was inflexible—the weapons were duly loaded—the distance measured—the rivals placed twelve paces apart—and the signal explained distinctly.

Never did men take their ground with deadlier intent. Deep undying hatred steeled the heart of one—in his antagonist he saw the murderer of her whom he adored so devotedly, and nothing but blood could satiate the revengeful spirit that filled his bosom. With the other, the same deadly feelings existed; but they arose from a different cause. The arrangements made

by his second showed clearly that O'Connor came to the field determined to destroy his rival, or fall himself; and the only chance by which his own life might be saved, was by taking that of the avenger of Mary Howard. When Bouverie presented the weapons, and Phillips observed the firm and unshaken attitude of his rival—the steady and concentrated look with which he measured him, as if selecting a spot more mortal than another on which to inflict a death-wound, the blood deserted his cheeks—his knees smote each other—and while he took the pistols in his trembling grasp, he whispered in his friend's ear—“It is all over—I am a dead man!”

The word was given, and each arm was raised. Phillips fired instantly, and without effect; and while changing the discharged pistol for its companion, his opponent slowly brought his weapon to the present. *Three* might have been told before the trigger was drawn—a sudden shock, as if the touch of electricity, convulsed Phillips

for a moment—and tottering two paces forwards, he dropped before the second or surgeon could run to his assistance.

Unmoved, as if he had only fired at a tree, the avenger of the dead beauty retained his ground, while O'Brien joined those who supported the dying man. Dying he was, for the ball had passed through the lungs, and the immense hemorrhage it caused was already choking him. Phillips heard his doom pronounced, and, with difficulty, expressed a wish that O'Connor should draw near. O'Brien beckoned to him, and the soldier came forward and stood beside his prostrate enemy. With a last effort Phillips raised and suddenly discharged the pistol he still held, before any could suspect or prevent the act. The bullet perforated the hat of his antagonist, and merely grazed the skin. Whether to curse the failure of the attempt, or express his dying hatred, he strove to speak, but the words were unintelligible. The blood

rushed in torrents from his mouth, and, with a choking gurgle, he fell back in his second's arms, and expired.

Perfectly unmoved at the assassin effort of his foeman, the soldier regarded the dead man attentively. "Ellen!" he said, "thy prophecy has indeed been singularly accomplished!— Though he fell upon the field of honour, *he died a felon!* Come, O'Brien, we'll leave him to these gentlemen, and send them assistance from the inn."

While his second replaced the pistols in their case, O'Connor politely bowed to Bouverie and the doctor, assumed his cloak, and left the field leaning on his second's arm. The carriage was in waiting; and before the rustics, alarmed by the shots, could comprehend the nature of the affair, the avenger of beauty was driven from the village, as fast as four horses could expedite his escape.



THE CONCLUSION.

He rushed into the field, and, foremost fighting, fell,'
BYRON.

The most precious tears are those with which Heaven
bedews the unburied head of a soldier.
GOLDSMITH.



CONCLUSION.

THE death of Phillips, it may be supposed occasioned a powerful sensation; and inquiries into the causes that produced his fatal meeting with Colonel O'Connor, displayed his character in its true light, and discovered the remorseless cruelty with which poor Mary had been sacrificed. While the memory of the dead *roué* was execrated by all, a deep sympathy was excited for his brave and unfortunate antagonist; and if general commiseration could sooth a wounded spirit, O'Connor might have felt its influence and been once more happy.

But a lacerated heart commonly rejects human consolation. O'Connor abruptly retired from the world—"Peace was proclaimed"—and the profession he once gloried in—robbed of its danger and excitement—had now no charms for him. He left the army, and buried himself in a deserted mansion-house which he found upon his estate—and that estate was situated in the remotest district of the wildest province in Ireland.

In the parsonage of Ashfield Mr. Howard passed the short and melancholy remnant of a virtuous and "noiseless life." He bowed with Christian humility to the visitation which deprived him of that beautiful and beloved object on whom, from infancy, all his hopes had centred. Poor Mary's boy with the orphan of Badajoz, divided his affections—their education amused his idle hours—and leaving worldly cares to one who faithfully applied herself to the task, he calmly prepared for that

great change, which should unite him to his lost child in another and a better existence.

And who was she who smoothed the pillow of declining age, and watched over infant orphanage? Ellen, the gipsy—who with a devotion that might have been better expected from a *religieuse*, than one of her wild and unsettled character, abandoned her wandering tribe, and took up her residence at Mr. Howard's. *There* her heart seemed fixed; and no mother cherished a first-born with more tenderness than she attended to her helpless charge. At stated times O'Connor, “a melancholy man,” visited his *protégés*; and although in his intercourse with the good old vicar he assumed his accustomed serenity, at midnight when the villagers were sleeping, the soldier and the gipsy might have been found in the cemetery of Ashfield, beside the grave of her whom in life they had both loved so faithfully.

Months rolled on—Napoleon burst again

upon the world—the sceptre of a mighty nation was wrenched from the feeble grasp that held it—and Europe was once more in arms. O'Connor, in his wild retirement, for a few weeks watched calmly the progress of the mighty events then transacting on the continent. Gradually new objects interested—a new spirit was created—those feelings which circumstances had smothered for a season, were animated again—one engrossing passion returned—and he left his mountain home, repaired to the metropolis, and asked and obtained a regiment.

* * * * *

Picton's division had marched on Quatre-Bras three hours before O'Connor, on a jaded hack, rode into the streets of Brussels. At an enormous price he purchased a fresh horse, and followed at speed the corps in which his regiment was brigaded. The road was easily made out; and long before he came in sight of the Bois de Bossu, an increasing cannonade and

sharper roll of musketry, told plainly that the work of death had commenced.

From stragglers he obtained information where he should find his regiment; and a wounded soldier, whom he encountered tottering to the rear, confirmed it. The colonel galloped forward—wheeled, as he had been directed, to the left—and, as his regiment were forming for cavalry, rode into the square, and announced himself their commander. He was instantly recognised, and a hearty cheer welcomed him to the battle-ground.

With that glorious and bloody field we have no business, save to cursorily remark, that considering the force engaged, it was not second even to “immortal Waterloo.” O’Connor’s was one of the regiments most pressed; but, charge after charge the French cavalry were repulsed, and though sadly reduced in numbers, “few but fearless still,” it now awaited a threatened attack of infantry. It came. Steadily the diminished line, not covering half the

ground it did two hours before, received the fire of their assailants. A quick and murderous volley answered it. "Charge!" cried a voice that rose loud and clear above the roar of battle. The bayonets were levelled—the rush was made—all gave way before it—but a straggling shot struck the gallant leader—and O'Connor dropping from his saddle, "fighting foremost, fell!"

Night came. That had been the last effort of Ney. It failed—and the French retired. The British held the battle-ground undisputed; and at the foot of the pine-tree where he died, a grave was hastily turned up, and on the spot where he fell, O'Connor was interred by the survivors of his regiment.

* * * * *

'Time passed. The turf was green upon the relics of the brave; and, on the anniversary of the battle, many a village maid visited the field, and many a votive wreath was hung above the graves of those who fell at Quatre-Bras.

It was on the tenth anniversary of that proud and bloody day, that a female, accompanied by two handsome boys, was seen kneeling at a little mound, which indicated that a departed warrior was sleeping beneath it. The woman was sinking into the vale of years, and her hair once of raven blackness, was thickly silvered by time and sorrow; but still the remains of beauty might be traced in features which had once been remarkable for their loveliness. The elder of the boys was apparently of Spanish lineage; and his olive complexion and dark brows formed a striking contrast to the fair skin and laughing blue eyes of his younger and handsomer companion. They remained till evening beside the grave; and, before they left the spot, hung a garland upon the branches of the pine-tree which shaded the ashes of the dead soldier.

Five years passed—the anniversary of Quatre-Bras again arrived—and two youths, now verging upon manhood, were seen kneeling at the same mound. No female accompanied

them—and they were habited in deep mourning, such as children wear to denote the loss of a parent. They were the orphan *protégés* of Colonel O'Connor, and their protectress was no more. Ellen had paid the debt of nature—that wild and tameless spirit found repose where the weary rest—her own mingled with her mother's ashes—and she slept beside that gentle being whom in life she loved so well—that victim of man's perfidy—Mary Howard.

THE END.





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